The MULTIFORMAT games magazine of the future | £4 | www.totalgames.net | 05



PS2 | GameCube | Xbox | PC | GBA | Arcade | Retro

FEATURE
THE HISTORY OF NINTENDO
Pure genious

REVIEWS
MIDNIGHT CLUB II
CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 4
POKEMON RUBY & SAPPHIRE
VIRTUA FIGHTER 4 EVOLUTION
KUNG FOO CHAOS
DARK CLOUD 2
MOTO GP3
FREELANCER
VIETCONG
RYGAR
ISS 3



Is Link ready for his greatest challenge ever?

INVESTIGATED
CAN GAMES BE GOOD FOR YOU?
We reveal the shocking truth




eMag

Nintendo has taken something of a beating recently. Falling hardware sales, types of software available and failure to commit to online gaming have all conspired to give Nintendo the air of a company that is lagging behind not just Sony but even Microsoft.

Certainly, there appears to be a lack of confidence in the hardware with the Dixons group slashing the cost of games and consoles to a point where it seems that either Nintendo has a cunning plan that it has yet to announce or the console is soon to disappear from many gaming outlets.

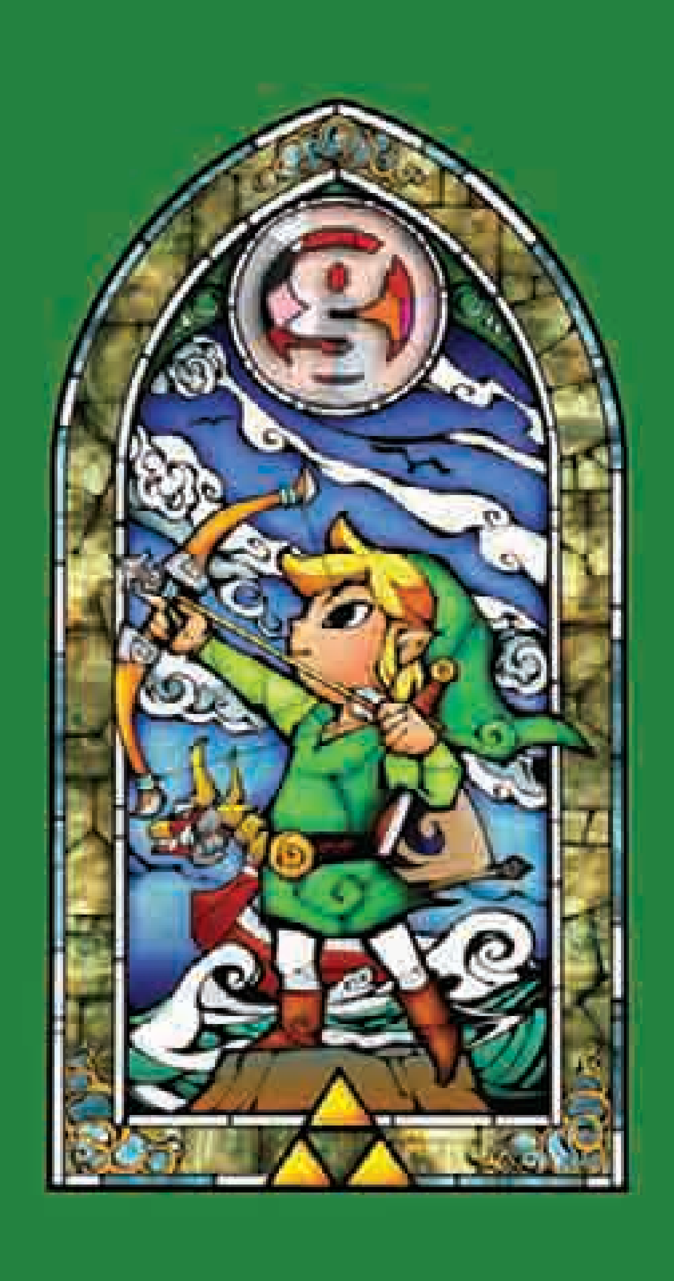
However (and this is the important part), Nintendo remains at the forefront of games development. Whether it is assisting the design of the superb *Metroid Prime* or (as is the case with the latest incarnation of *Zelda*) evolving a gaming icon, Nintendo can, almost without question, be relied upon to deliver the kinds of gaming experiences other developers can only dream of. Whatever the future has in store for the venerable company, games™ hopes that it continues to bring smiles to the faces of gamers all over the world.

Simon Phillips, Group Editor

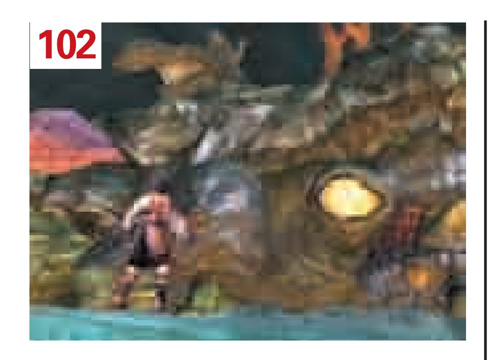




Come kneel, and worship
at the Church of Link...



CONTENTS


102


122


60

FEATURES

RETRO GAMING
The perfect place to be for classic games, whether you remember them or not.

PREVIEWS 52

REVIEWS 96

REGULARS



52 SILENT HILL 3

Sofa cushions at the ready – Konami's latest effort looks like it's going to be the scariest game of them all…

NEWS

NEWS | **INDUSTRY GOSSIP** | OPINION

CONTENTS

FIND OUT WHERE TO GET THE ESSENTIAL STORIES WITH OUR QUICK GUIDE TO THE NEWS



GAME FOR GAMEC



OVER UBE?

NINTENDO FACES PRESSURE AS HIGH STREET STORES LOOK SET TO DROP ITS YEAR-OLD MACHINE

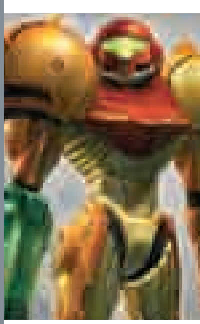
Troubled Nintendo faces further worries this month, with some retailers slashing the price of GameCube hardware and software. Of course, while this is extremely good news for gamers, what does it mean for the machine itself? Activision, THQ and Codemasters have virtually abandoned the year-old machine, citing below par software sales as the reason. Christmas was a lean period too, as GameCube owners were faced with a lacklustre European line-up (*Starfox Adventures* and *Mario Party 4*, anyone?).

Then came the price cuts. The Dixons group sold a package of a GameCube and one title at £99.99. With their stock now cleared out, stores are making extra shelf space for the PS2 and Xbox. When questioned about the possibility of continued support by the group, a spokesman remained vague: "We haven't made a definite decision yet and it is dependent on customer demand," he said.

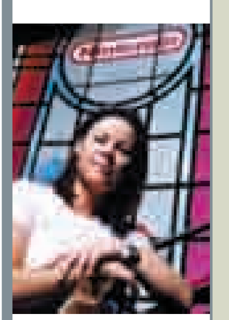
However, it's Argos that is proving to be really behind the GameCube thanks to its £78.99 bundle (GameCube, game and memory card) – in fact, the company is now ordering new GameCube stock after sales of the console went through the roof. Elsewhere, GAME is still happily selling 'Cubes and has only decided against stocking the new modems for *Phantasy Star Online*. However, when we asked GAME if it felt that other retailers were being premature in writing off the GameCube, we received a very firm "no comment". It's a fair point to make though, as across the UK the GameCube has seen four consecutive week-on-week increases in units sold, with sales up 68 per cent.

Nintendo is now making a concerted effort to raise the GameCube's profile. A €20 million promotion that ties in with the launch of the Game Boy Advance SP will see the first 400,000 Advance SPs come with a £30 discount voucher for the GameCube. Nintendo is also keen to forge stronger links with developers such as EA, which has committed itself to bringing 20 new titles to the machine – a move that is bound to make other companies reconsider their view of Nintendo's hardware.

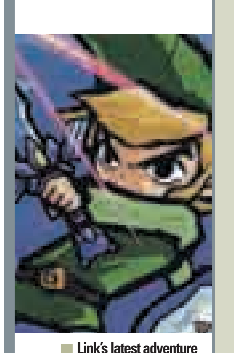
While the 'Cube continues to be overlooked by many gamers, Nintendo could come back from the brink. With *The Wind Waker*'s release imminent and big announcements expected at E3, Nintendo may still be in the race yet.



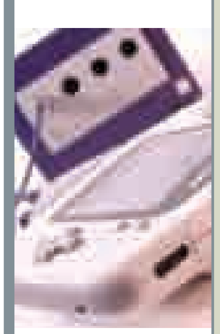
With games like *Prime* dominating the charts, is it a little too early to write off GameCube?



Shelly Friend says Nintendo is buoyant.



Link's latest adventure could be a valuable lifeline for the GameCube.



Increased GBA-to-GC connectivity could benefit both game systems.

EVERYBODY'S HAPPY...AREN'T THEY?

NINTENDO – WHAT THE COMPANY HAS TO SAY

While the GameCube has been constantly trailing behind the Xbox and PlayStation2, the recent price cuts at Argos seem to have had a very positive effect on sales. Shelly Friend, PR head of Nintendo Europe, was particularly pleased with the results: "We're really pleased with GameCube's sales and have sold 14,000 units in the last week. We currently have a 40 per cent share of the market and *Metroid Prime* has gone straight to the number one position in the multiformat chart, so all in all it's been a great week for GameCube."

ARGOS – THE SHOP THAT SHIFTED THE 'CUBE

Initially done as a counter strike against the deal in Dixons, Argos underestimated the amount of interest their discount would attract. "Argos had a lot of GameCubes in stock and saw an opportunity to offer customers the format at an excellent price of £78.99," said a spokesman. "This has led to an unbelievable increase in demand and we are replenishing stock to cope with that demand." Unfortunately, the deal is no longer running at the time of going to press and Argos can't confirm a similar price in the future.

THE INDEPENDENT RETAILER – MISSING OUT?

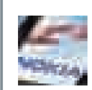
It's all very well being able to pick up a GameCube from Argos for next to nothing, but what does this mean for the smaller independent trader? Speaking to our local indie, Video Game Centre, we asked how they felt about the low Argos price. "It's not good for the GameCube or for us," they replied. "We won't stock the hardware unless Nintendo lower our trade price, so we can sell it [the GameCube] for the same price [as Argos]." Staff in the store were clearly unhappy with the high street price cut and even believed that a deal may have been struck between Nintendo and Argos to secure the low price.

THE SOFTWARE COMPANY – A BEAUTIFUL FRIENDSHIP?

Electronic Arts is fully supporting Nintendo's GameCube, with 20 titles planned, many with a strong focus on GBA-to-GameCube connectivity. "Nintendo GameCube and Game Boy Advance link up to bring gamers enhanced gameplay, and allows developers to stretch their creativity in unique and original ways," commented David Gosen, managing director of Nintendo Europe. EA's senior vice president and general manager David Gardner also has high hopes for the collaboration, "This agreement means that three of our most popular sports games are going to include a new way to compete on Nintendo systems."

Data stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



VIVA LA REVOLUTION!

Expect plenty of explosions in the palm of your hand very soon – THQ is developing *Red Faction* for Nokia's upcoming N-Gage handheld. The first-person shooter is being developed by Monkeystone Games and is being overseen by none other than John Romero, the visionary behind FPS franchises such as *Doom*, *Wolfenstein 3D* and *Quake*. Romero is certainly excited about the project: "It's a real challenge to create a fast 3D game on such cutting-edge hardware and I'm loving every minute of it," he said.





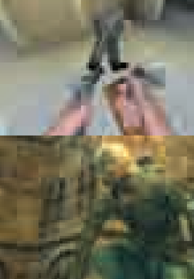
AND THE WINNER IS…

Honouring a career spanning some of SEGA's most innovative games, AM2 frontman Yu Suzuki has been given the prestigious Academy of Interactive Arts and Science Hall of Fame Award. The gaming world's lifetime achievement award has previously been won by the likes of Miyamoto-san and Will Wright, creator of *The Sims*. Suzuki-san is a lead developer at SEGA and has worked on the popular franchises *Out Run*, *Virtua Fighter* and *Shenmue*.



The use of actual cars in racing games creates brand awareness.

Chester Cheetah and Cool Spot were invented in order to shift drinks and crisps.



Dante can get kitted out in head-to-toe Diesel in *Devil May Cry 2*. Flash git.

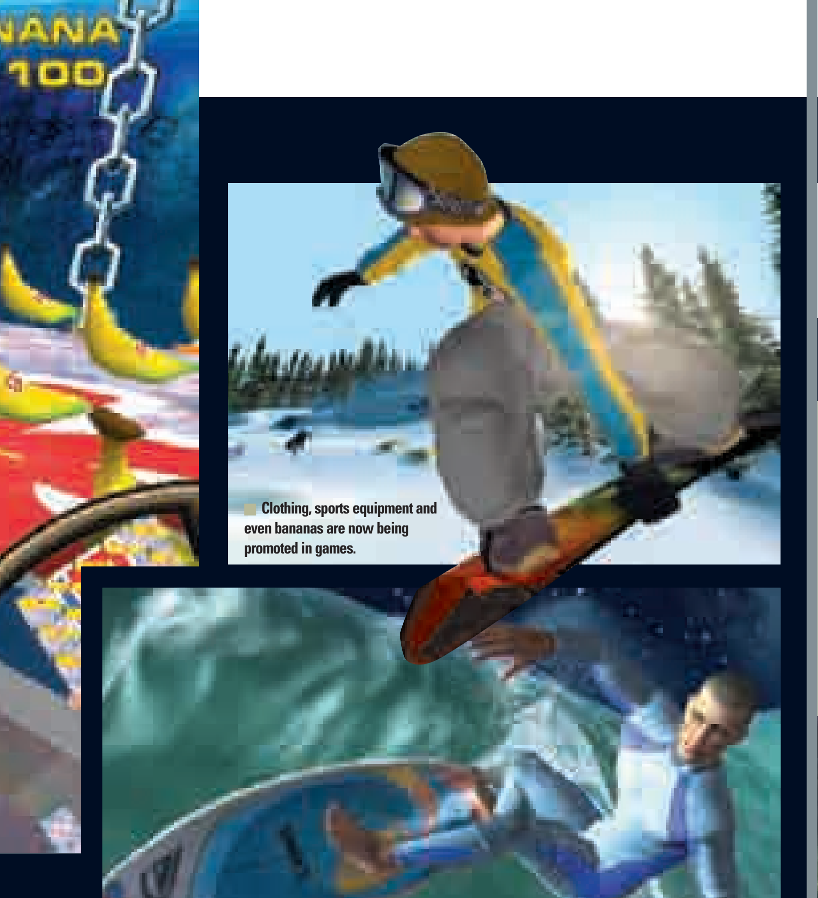
BUY! BUY! BUY! EFFECTIVENESS OF IN-GAME ADVERTISING TO BE STUDIED BY ACADEMICS AND AD MEN

DRINK BEER, SMOKE TABS

A company specialising in product placement in videogames has announced its intentions to begin testing the effectiveness of subtle (and not so subtle) in-game advertising. JAM International Partners, Inc will work with Assistant Professor Michelle R Nelson, a leading researcher of film and videogame product placement who's currently based at the University of Wisconsin.

Promising to be the first of its kind, the research is to be commissioned by a trio of companies working in partnership on a product placement deal. In the past, we've seen Diesel clothing in *Devil May Cry 2*, Dole bananas in *Super Monkey Ball* and the likes of Pizza Hut and Tower Records in *Crazy Taxi*, so this initiative is nothing new. Of course, with product placement in videogames first appearing in the late Eighties, it's surprising that companies have waited so long to find out its actual effectiveness. Professor Nelson has already researched quite extensively in the field, first publishing her findings in an article entitled 'Recall of Brand Placements in Computer and Videogames'.

Professor Nelson's first experiment was exploring the effectiveness of a brand in racing games. It was discovered that products or companies were more memorable whenever they became a major part of the title's gameplay or were particularly relevant to the actual consumer. The gamers who were tested felt that they did not feel that the product placement was deceptive and that in certain circumstances could actually help to enhance realism. The overall results for the research were generally positive and are best summed up by Professor Nelson herself: "We've only just begun to understand the effectiveness of brand placement in video-games,"



Clothing, sports equipment and even bananas are now being promoted in games.

Kelly Slater's Pro Surfer and Microsoft's *Amped* are just a few videogames that feature branded clothing.

"THE EXPLOSIVE GROWTH OF SOFTWARE SALES IS MAKING IN-GAME PRODUCT PLACEMENT THE MOST DESIRABLE FORM OF BRAND COMMUNICATION"

JOSHUA GRAFF, MANAGING DIRECTOR, JAM

she says, "and are pleased to have the opportunity to further our learning through actual games being developed for consumers on a large scale, versus ones created largely for testing in a laboratory setting."

JAM International Partners has now entered into new discussions with an as yet unnamed major videogame publisher and a leading consumer brand company with the aim of creating a whole series of videogame product placements which will then undergo strict testing to prove their actual effectiveness. At the moment, none of the companies are willing to divulge any further information about the new partnership, although they are hoping to reveal details of the research study at this year's E3.

Joshua Graff, managing director of JAM, has high hopes for the unique experiment: "The response by our partners to this idea of research has been fantastic. The goal is to develop a body of learning that will help us understand what type of brand placements are most effective, looking at a whole array of variables, from the genre of the game to the role and prominence of the brand within the game.

"The explosive growth of console and software sales, which now account for more than £2 billion in the UK alone, coupled with the never-ending quest by companies to make their brands more visible to young consumers, is making in-game product placement the most sought after and desirable new form of brand communication."

With product placement becoming even more popular within the industry, we're interested to see how JAM and Professor Nelson's research eventually turns out. However, with companies becoming increasingly sensitive as to how their products are displayed (after all, we're not likely to see well-known family brands in the likes of *Max Payne* or *Vice City*) a conclusion to this research could be a long time coming…

GIRLS IN GAMES

The female game character has taken a very long time to evolve into anything remotely akin to the current characters female gamers now crave.

Vixen
In the late Eighties, women were not even considered to be regular gamers. The result was embarrassingly sexist advertising as found in *Vixen* and *Barbarian*.



Tomb Raider
Lara Croft seemed the perfect choice for all gamers when she first appeared on the PlayStation. Unfortunately, later games focused more on the character's clothing and breasts – so female appeal quickly waned.

Shadow Over Mystara
This is more like it. Capcom's Elf wore suitable clothing (especially when compared to the steel bikinis of *Golden Axe*) and could more than hold her own against the other characters in this great scrolling fighter.

Buffy the Vampire Slayer
Buffy has the best of both worlds. She's sexy enough for the male gamers and sassy enough for the women – and currently one of the best videogame heroines around. You go, girl.



GAMES INDUSTRY LOSES SALES AS IT FAILS TO UNDERSTAND THE FEMALE MARKET

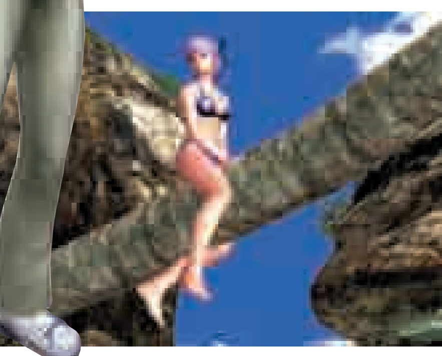
THE FEMININE TOUCH

One of the more interesting meetings at the recent Game Developers Conference in San Jose, California focused on the failure of the games industry to appeal to the female market. Whilst female gaming isn't exactly a new topic, the current argument suggests that the games industry is missing out on huge sales figures because it simply doesn't understand this potential new market.

Clarrinda Merripen, human resource manager of CyberLore Studios, believes that the lack of female interest in gaming is something that needs to be addressed: "I don't think they [women] have necessarily been ignored but I think the gaming industry has grown up male and now they're looking around and trying to make that leap because they have to."

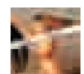
According to EA's community manager, Lizzie Deighton, there's an obvious place for the industry to start. "Stop creating female leads for eye candy," she says, "and start creating them as good characters to play – one that is attractive, strong minded, fun and wickedly sly. Take Buffy, for instance. She can plan her prom outfit, rugby tackle frothing-at-the-mouth werewolves into the ground and still find time to hang out with her friends."

Of course, developers can't expect women to start playing overnight, but the industry needs to start evolving sooner rather than later.



Data Stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



IN THE FLESH

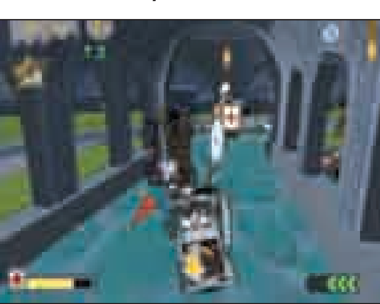
Thanks to various socially inept Xbox owners with too much time on their hands, it's now possible to play *DOA Xtreme Beach Volleyball* the way Tecmo never intended – with naked ladies. Not surprisingly, Tecmo is suitably peeved about this: "Please do not post anything about nude patches and other hacked information, or you will be punished to the fullest extent of the law," said a moderator post on its official forum page. "The recent links we have seen clearly show images of our game that have been modified or altered. We cannot permit this behaviour." You've been warned…





I'D BUY THAT FOR A TENNER

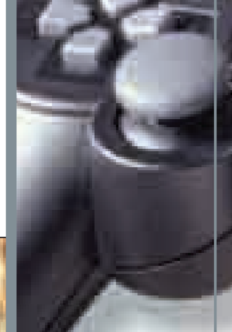
Gamers who balk at paying £19.99 for the latest Platinum release will be pleased to hear there's a new range of PlayStation2 titles in the pipeline that'll cost a paltry £10. Play It Ltd is a new subsidiary of System 3 and its first games will include *Cel Damage* (previously released full price on Xbox and Cube) and *Seek And Destroy*, a customisable tank combat game. Subsequently, Play It will be releasing four new titles on a regular basis and is hoping to have at least 20 titles available by the end of the year.

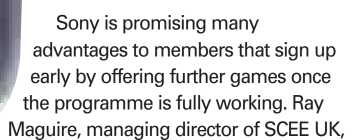




LET'S ALL GO LIVE

SONY ATTEMPTS TO STEAL XBOX LIVE'S THUNDER WITH BETA TEST NEWS

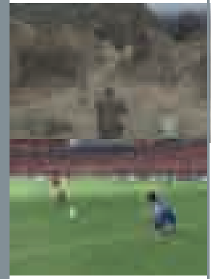








With over 175,000 people playing online in America, *SOCOM* is an ideal entry point for UK gamers.



Could two of PlayStation2's biggest sport franchises appear on its live service?

Never one to miss an opportunity to burst a competitor's bubble, Sony recently announced details of its online service plans – a full week before Microsoft's Xbox Live launch. With consumer trials already underway, interested PS2 owners had the opportunity to sign up for the service after completing a questionnaire at www.uk.playstation.com.

But in a move that is sure to upset many cash-strapped gamers, Sony's online service will be available for broadband users only. While this means the service will be reliable and fast, it does alienate a large number of PS2 owners. Those who were lucky enough to be selected for the trials received a starter kit comprising a PlayStation2 Network Adaptor, a special online version of *SOCOM: US Navy Seals* and a *SOCOM* USB headset for free; the actual starter pack costs £39.99 and will only be available via Sony's online shop.

Will Sony walk all over Xbox Live? It might just happen…

Sony is promising many advantages to members that sign up early by offering further games once the programme is fully working. Ray Maguire, managing director of SCEE UK, clearly has high hopes for the service: "The consumer trials will help determine the shape and nature of the commercial offering of this service," he said. "But rest assured, our ethos remains one of having a very diverse and inclusive platform that will enable games publishers and ISPs to provide consumers with the broadest selection of entertainment from a variety of sources."

Although the version of *SOCOM* given away with the starter pack only features the game's online elements, members who successfully complete the trial will get a free full copy of the game. BT Openworld, NTL, Telewest Broadband and Freeserve are just a selection of the broadband partners with whom Sony will be working to provide customers with plenty of competitive options specifically tailored to network gaming.

While no official launch date has been confirmed, we believe that Sony's announcement will ensure that many PS2 owners may simply wait for the service to be officially up and running, rather than head on over to Microsoft's Xbox Live servers. The possibility of sport franchises from the likes of Electronic Arts and Konami (*Pro Evolution* online, perhaps?) will also be a major contributing factor and is sure to become a powerful weapon for Sony.

DREAMCATCHER INTERACTIVE LTD AND SEGA SET UP EUROPEAN OFFICES

DO THE CONTINENTAL

SEGA and DreamCatcher Interactive Inc are finally ready to start releasing their own games in Europe. *Phantasy Star Online: Episodes 1&2* for the Xbox will be the first title to be published by SEGA Europe, with *Virtua Fighter 4 Evolution* (PS2) and *Sonic Adventure DX Director's Cut* (GameCube) due out in June. With its publishing deals between Infogrames, Acclaim and Sony now drawing to a close, SEGA is looking to regain its large back catalogue of games and represent itself in Europe. With many of its recent releases selling badly though (*Panzer Dragoon Orta* limped into the multiformat chart at number 21), we suspect that SEGA needs to adopt a more aggressive marketing approach.

With the European HQ now in place in London, SEGA is planning a second office in Paris, which is also the new home of DreamCatcher Interactive Ltd. Already one of the top ten PC publishers in America, DreamCatcher consists of two labels – The Adventure Company and Dreamcatcher Games – and is bringing the likes of *Painkiller* (an undead-blasting FPS) and *Harbinger* (RPG sci-fi action) to gamers in 2003. "The two brands divide our business perfectly," said Oliver Pierre, DreamCatcher Europe CEO. "We make a clear statement that we offer the best in adventure games, yet have a strong portfolio of other genres." With DreamCatcher expecting to be a top 20 publisher in Europe by 2004 and SEGA hoping to revive its fortunes, we're hoping to see excellent results from both firms.



Harbinger and *Painkiller* are just two of the titles DreamCatcher are hoping to launch in Europe.

games™ THE TOP FIVE

'WHAT ON EARTH WERE THEY THINKING?' GAMES

No.5 VIB RIBBON

Vibri's happy, but what about everyone else?

No.4 LOW RIDER

Dancing cars – whatever next?

No.3 FREAK OUT

Women with stretchy breasts? Er, okay…

No.2 SWITCH

Possibly the most ridiculous concept EVER.

No.1 N'SYNC – GET TO THE SHOW

But did anyone really bye-bye-buy it? Er… no.



TEKKI TRAUMA

PROBLEMS FOR MICROSOFT AS STEEL BATTALION SELLS OUT

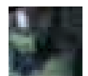
The recent launch of Capcom's *Steel Battalion* (known as *Tekki* in Japan) has proved to be a real headache for Microsoft, with some unsatisfied customers not receiving their expected pre-orders. According to reports, certain major retailers had problems with their pre-ordering system and ordered too few units to meet the expected demand. With no stores likely to be selling the package off the shelf due to the limited supply, many gamers will be forced to look elsewhere for the elusive title.

Online auction house eBay is already the main port of call, with ten copies of the game for sale at the time of going to press. It's not clear where these copies have sprung from, though the fact that many are selling for more than the original package is sure to anger disappointed Xbox owners. Microsoft is well aware of the shortages: "There was limited stock on allocation, so we made the decision to allocate stock to retailers that ran pre-orders," said Microsoft PR manager Nick Grange. "The orders have been well over our initial expectations, so unfortunately and unavoidably there may be some disappointed customers." Hopefully, Microsoft will ship further copies of the game, but it should take heart that the title's been so popular…



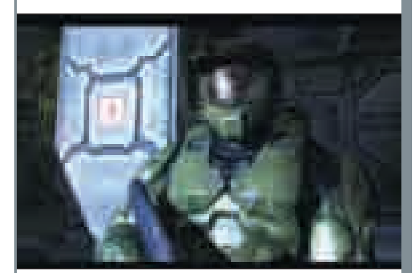
Data Stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



YOU CAN HAVE IT WHEN IT'S READY

Well, there's a surprise – Microsoft's biggest title of the year, *Halo 2*, has now definitely slipped and will not be released until at least 2004. While no doubt a bit of a blow to Xbox owners everywhere, we can't help feeling that this will give Bungie plenty of time to correct the (very) small niggles we had with the original game. Our only concern is that Microsoft may decide to change its mind and stick to its original date as they did with the original – *Halo* was rushed to meet Xbox's launch and suffered because of it.





OUR SURVEY SAYS…

Sony's PlayStation2 has been voted games developers' console of choice in a survey carried out by tools developer SN Systems. The online survey was sent to 75 developers and industry workers to find out which console they had most enjoyed playing in their lifetime. The PS2 garnered more than a fifth of the votes (23 per cent), with Nintendo's SNES only slightly behind with 19 per cent. Xbox and GameCube came third and fourth respectively.



THE WIT AND WISDOM OF PETER MOLYNEUX

"HE'S ALWAYS GOT SOMETHING TO SAY!"

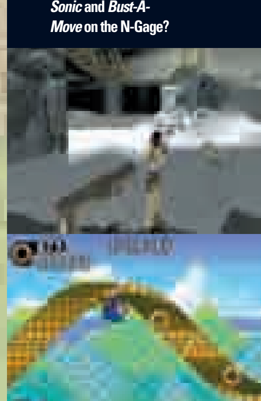
PETER ON THE STATE OF THE INDUSTRY:

"Making a computer game now is incredibly expensive – a few developers are really struggling"

Translation: "I can't afford to make Populous again, but I doubt that anyone will notice"

MORE FROM PETER NEXT MONTH!





If Peer-to-Peer Systems wins its lawsuit, could it mean the end of the likes of *Sonic* and *Bust-A-Move* on the N-Gage?

Peer-to-Peer Systems claim that Cybiko's handheld device (above) is breaching the patent for wireless gaming.

BUT MISS, HE COPIED ME

POSSIBLE PROBLEMS FOR N-GAGE OVER MOBILE GAMING PATENT LAWSUIT



Well, you learn something new every day. According to a patent that dates back to 1995, the complete rights to any form of wireless multiplayer gaming belong to a little-known company called Peer-to-Peer Systems. Currently engaged in fierce litigation with developers Palm (over its PDAs being able to play games over wireless networks) and Cybiko (who manufacture a handheld gaming device with wireless multiplayer options), Peer-to-Peer's patent was originally filed in 1995 and eventually granted by a US patent office to Michael Kagan and Ian Solomon in 1997.

Essentially, it consists of the patenting of 'an interactive multiple-player game system including at least two playing devices communicating over an ad-hoc, wireless, all to-all broadcast network'. Palm and Peer-to-Peer Systems had initially been in negotiations over a licensing fee, although these have since broken down and a lawsuit is now in progress.

As you might expect, this situation could have serious consequences for handheld gaming. For instance, there's currently been no action recorded against Nokia or its upcoming N-Gage system although considering the machine's potential, we're sure that the company will be watching the proceeding court cases with great interest – it's quite possible that Nokia could be next on Peer-to-Peer's agenda depending on how successful it is with its current two lawsuits.

If successful, the ramifications for Nokia could be difficult to say the least, as Bluetooth link technology is being used to enable all its wireless gaming. Of course, it seems very unlikely that the patent will actually stop the evolution of wireless multiplayer gaming either now or any time in the future. However, if Peer-to-Peer Systems wins its cases, it could set a precedent that could lead to huge payoffs for the firm.



MICROSOFT GETS SET TO DROP STAFF IN JAPAN

CUTTING IN A BOX

The Japanese arm of Microsoft's Xbox department is set to lose several members of staff as the machine continues to struggle in Japan. Thirty four employees will go from the marketing and production departments. "Xbox is refining its strategy in Japan to deliver gaming experiences and other services more directly targeted to the Japanese consumer," said Microsoft's Nick Grange. "As a result of this effort, 34 positions will be made redundant to streamline operations and position the business for long-term success."

Although the machine has been out for a year in Japan, it has only managed to sell 370,000 units (Nintendo's GameCube has shifted over a million in a similar period). Of course, the staff cutbacks are just one of several hitches that the company has faced since it launched the Xbox in 2002. With Japanese gamers complaining of scratched discs, Konami refusing to release games in Japan, and head of Xbox Japan, Hirohisa Ohura, being repositioned within the company, Microsoft has had plenty of troubles.

Only Tecmo has achieved financial success on the Xbox in Japan, partly thanks to *DOA Xtreme Beach Volleyball* selling 73,000 copies on its first day of release.

Microsoft's *Kakuto Chojin* failed to make an impact in Japan and was quickly dropped on religious grounds (or so they said…).



This round of staff cuts can only be bad news for Microsoft, who has struggled to sell the Xbox in Japan.

DOAXBV has managed to keep Xbox alive in Japan.

YUNA HITS THE BIG TIME

FINAL FANTASY X-2 PROVES TO BE ANOTHER HUGE SUCCESS FOR SQUARE

Square's *Final Fantasy X-2* is currently dominating the Japanese software chart with first week sales of 1.5 million. Not surprisingly, the many game districts of Japan were filled with gamers patiently awaiting the chance to enjoy Yuna's continuing adventures. *Final Fantasy X-2* was a bit of a departure for Square, as it was the first time it has ever created a direct sequel to one of its *Final Fantasy* games.

Whilst the sequel hasn't sold as well as *Final Fantasy X* (which sold 1.7 million units in its first week) the figures are still very impressive and are sure to please Square's bosses, particularly because *Final Fantasy X-2* represents 70 per cent of the sales in the Japanese software market.

When you take into account that *The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past* achieved just under 100,000 units in the same period it's clear that Sony's stranglehold on Japan is going to be very hard to loosen. With no official release date in Europe yet, we'll be looking towards the more text-friendly US version (due in October) for our *Final Fantasy X-2* fix instead.

GAMES ROOM 101

THINGS WE HATE ABOUT VIDEOGAMES



NO.5: HERE COMES THE BANDWAGON

While some of us might not agree that the concept of originality in gaming is dead, there's certainly a fair point to be made for certain developers waiting for the 'next big thing' to come along and then leaping on it with a passion. Yes, bandwagon jumping (where a new and interesting concept appears in one title, shortly before everyone else steals it for their own) is getting more common these days, with everything from subtle concepts to entire genre ideas being copied in an effort to grab sales.

Notice the sudden increase in overly violent games? That'll be *Grand Theft Auto*'s fault then. Cel-shading being used in virtually every game featuring anything remotely connected to cartoons or comics? Take a bow, *Jet Set Radio* (yes, the original Dreamcast one – it's still being bled dry today). Even games in genres that don't really have much room for manoeuvre – such as football or realistic driving – have changed to reflect the current market leaders, namely *Pro Evolution* and *Gran Turismo A-Spec*.

Is it a case of imitation being the greatest form of flattery? Hardly. After all, this is a business and, for some people, making money is more important than coming up with something even vaguely original…



Today, *Jet Set Radio* – tomorrow, the world. Mwahaha! Ahem.

Currently, it's Ragdoll and Karma physics that are being used more than a flu sufferer's hanky…



BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



THE HEDGEHOG SPRINGS A LEAK

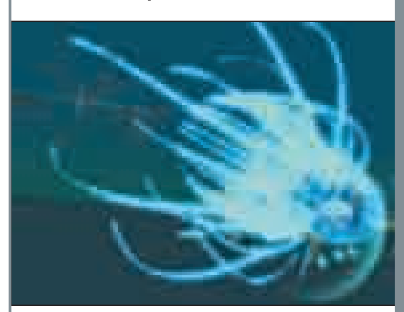
This month's deluge of Internet rumours has seen SEGA's entire multi-platform release list being leaked onto a number of Web sites – a list that appears to be very much in keeping with what SEGA might actually have planned. While we're very excited to see the likes of *Head Hunter 2* and *Sega Rally 3* (both allegedly for PS2) confirmed, we're still rather dubious as to the schedule's integrity; particularly since many of the officially announced titles like *SpikeOut X-treme* aren't present anywhere on the leaked list.



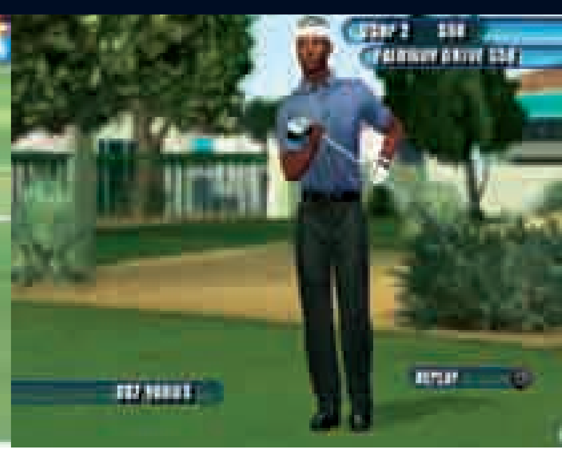


EXTRAS, EXTRAS

Having to wait ages for a game that's already out in Japan and the US is a pain, but Euro-gamers should be happy to hear that the PAL release of Konami's *Zone Of The Enders: The 2nd Runner* will have a set of extras specific to the European version. Additions include an all-new opening sequence, three new levels and two restructured versions of existing levels. Certain parts of the game can also be played as either part of the main game or via an Extra Mission mode. There are also two new difficulty settings: European Hard and European Extreme.







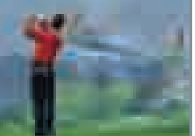
EA AND EIDOS REFUSE TO PLAY ONLINE AS MICROSOFT LAUNCHES ONLINE GAMING

WANTED: DEAD OR LIVE

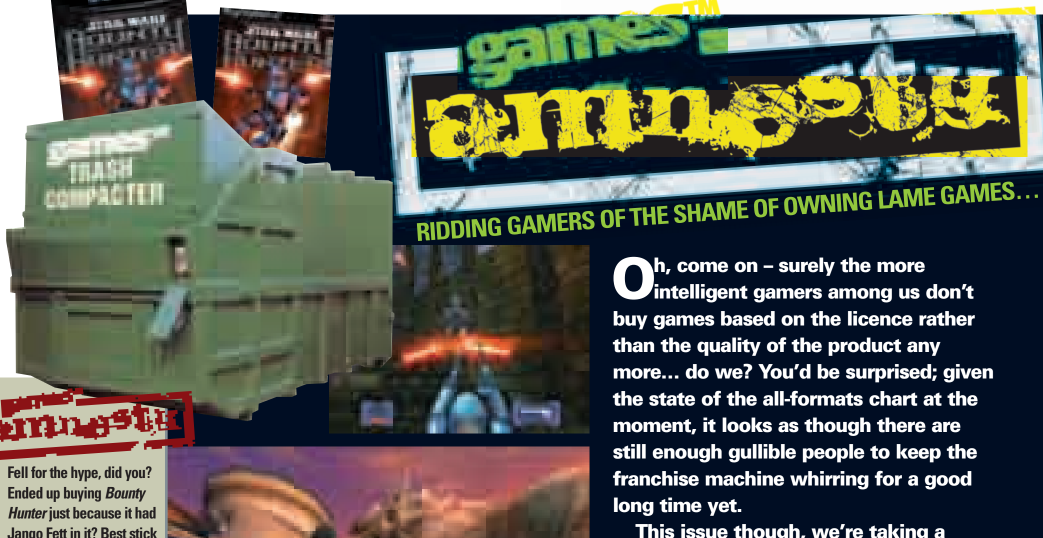
Electronic Arts and Eidos have both revealed that they will not be supporting Microsoft's Xbox Live service. While the likes of Activision, Capcom and Rockstar are happily jumping on the Xbox bandwagon, it seems that certain firms still cannot reach mutually acceptable terms with Microsoft.

Currently, Microsoft controls the Xbox Live servers, branding and marketing, but EA is said to be looking for a deal which would enable it to have more control over its own products. "EA has a strong partnership with Microsoft and has many leading games in development right now for future release on the Xbox," said Glen O'Connell, spokesman for EA. "At the present time, EA has no agreement with Microsoft to produce games that support the Xbox Live online capability." Eidos' response was similarly vague: "Although we have no imminent releases of games that support Xbox Live, we constantly review all opportunities and will be closely watching the launch and market response," said a spokesman.

Not having the support of EA and its mass of sports titles will be a massive blow for Xbox Live. Here's hoping the firms sort out their differences while Live is still hot.



Fancy some online gaming? You won't be getting it from EA unfortunately…



RIDDING GAMERS OF THE SHAME OF OWNING LAME GAMES…

Fell for the hype, did you? Ended up buying *Bounty Hunter* just because it had Jango Fett in it? Best stick it in a padded envelope and send it to us at:

He's No Use To Me Dead
games™
Paragon Publishing
Paragon House
St Peter's Road
Bournemouth
Dorset, BH1 2JS

Oh, come on – surely the more intelligent gamers among us don't buy games based on the licence rather than the quality of the product any more… do we? You'd be surprised; given the state of the all-formats chart at the moment, it looks as though there are still enough gullible people to keep the franchise machine whirring for a good long time yet.

This issue though, we're taking a stand against the biggest heretic of recent times – *Star Wars: Bounty Hunter*. Not only does it sully the already downtrodden greatness of the *Star Wars* legacy, but it makes a fool out of the universe's greatest bounty-hunting family, the Fetts. Damn you, LucasArts – why do you hurt us in the way you do?



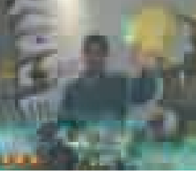
BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



THE FISH LIVES AGAIN

Having been gutted by the closure of GBA development house Crawfish Interactive, we're pleased to see that Climax has employed ex-Crawfish members Cameron Sheppard and Mike Merren to oversee its handheld development team. The new team of 20 is now hard at work on two new, but as yet undisclosed GBA games and is also considering the possibility of developing games for the N-Gage. Crawfish's unfortunate demise is sure to benefit Climax, so we're looking forward to their first games.





"Wooh! I'm a ghost!" Yeah, well done. Move along now…



SONY CONFIRMS RELEASE OF EYETOY IN THE UK

EYE, EYE COCKER

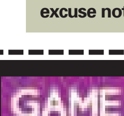
After much dithering, Sony has finally released details about the European launch of the Eyetoy – a peripheral that allows you to play motion-detecting games on the PlayStation2. The device, first demonstrated at 2002's E3 and later shown to an impressed public at Sony's PlayStation Experience at the ECTS (Electronic Consumer Trade Show), consists of a link-up between the PlayStation2 and a USB web camera. Players will then be able to track hand and body movements in real-time via their PS2.

Of course, not having to worry about the likes of cables will give the player total freedom of movement, and the image displayed on screen is said to be totally free of lag or delay, thus enabling gamers to have a truly interactive experience.

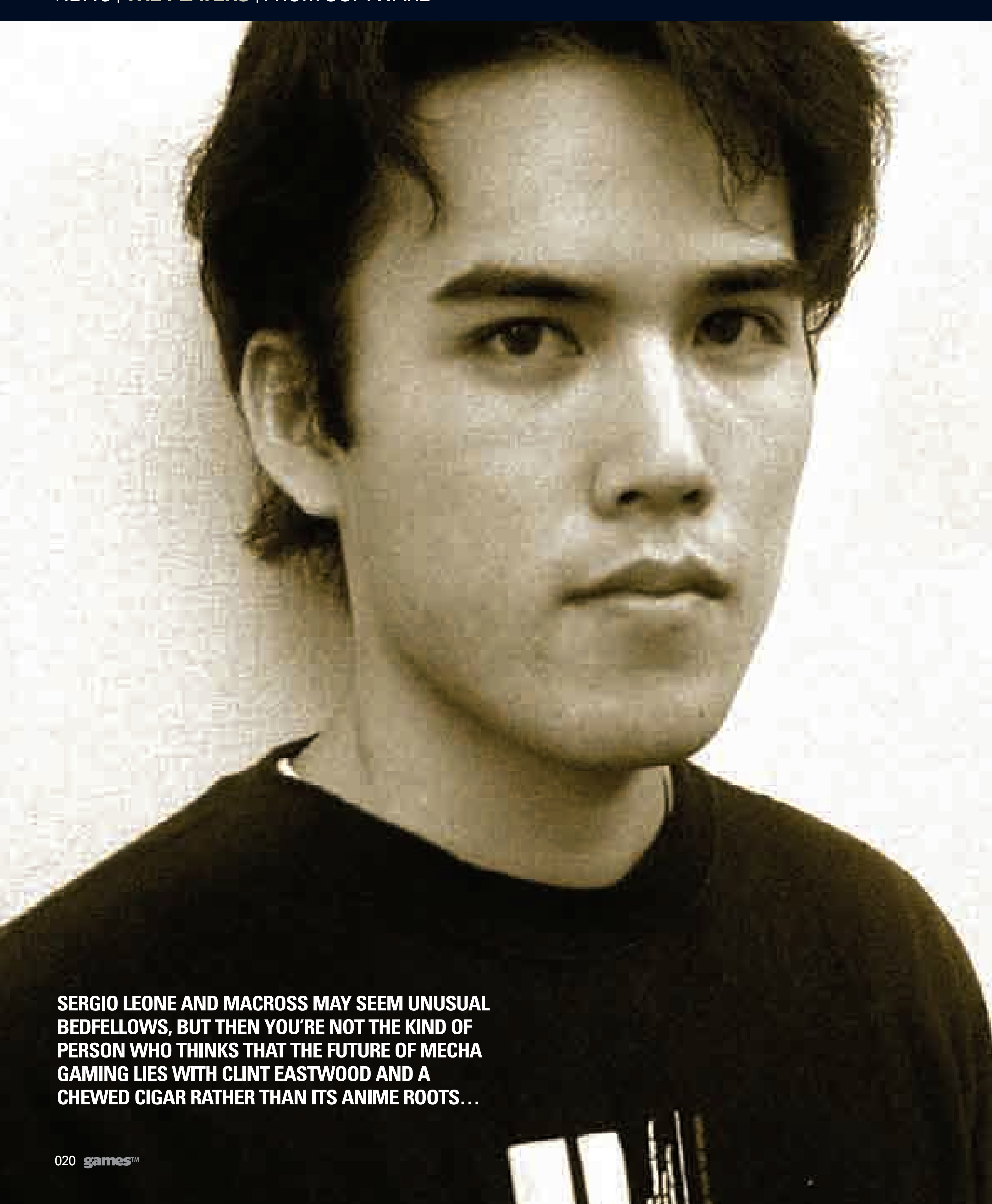
Ron Festejo, producer at SCEE, explains: "Eyetoy technology will revolutionise the way we play games. It's the first ever gaming experience that is instantly accessible to non-gamers because it requires no prior experience in gaming. People enjoy moving in front of a camera and love to see themselves on television. Games are more physical which means that that everyone can see your movement, making it an ideal post-pub or party activity." He may have a point – we were amazed at the sheer number of individuals who were prepared to get up on stage in front of everybody and humiliate themselves in the name of fun.

While the Eyetoy uses similar technology to Konami's *Police 24/7* and Namco's *Mazan: Flash Of The Blade*, the actual games appear to be a little less sophisticated. On a compendium consisting of around 15-20 titles, you'll soon be able to sample the delights of *WishiWashi* (a two-player game where you have to clean more windows than your opponent), *Plate Spinner* (spin as many plates as you can) and *Keep Ups* (keep a football in the air for as long as possible). We're hoping that the finished game disc will come with a body popping game and a booth which enables you to prance in private.

We've teamed up with those fine people at GAME to offer you a £5 discount voucher, thus ensuring your hard-earned cash will stretch just that little bit further. With plenty of quality games around at the moment, you've no excuse not to use it…







SERGIO LEONE AND MACROSS MAY SEEM UNUSUAL BEDFELLOWS, BUT THEN YOU'RE NOT THE KIND OF PERSON WHO THINKS THAT THE FUTURE OF MECHA GAMING LIES WITH CLINT EASTWOOD AND A CHEWED CIGAR RATHER THAN ITS ANIME ROOTS…



"I THINK IT WAS GREAT THAT PEOPLE CAME TO REALISE YOU COULD BUILD THE MECHA YOU OPERATED, NOT JUST OPERATE THE CHARACTER YOU LIKED"

KENICHIRO TSUKUDA, FROM SOFTWARE

KENICHIRO TSUKUDA

FROM SOFTWARE

For a Japanese game producer, Kenichiro Tsukuda is surprisingly easygoing – he's approachable and not afraid to discuss the intricacies of the games he has made. Despite his affable personality, you get the impression that he's a very focused man. Indeed, at the recent *Armored Core 3* tournament in Akihabara, Tsukuda could be seen on the sidelines watching the competitors like a hawk, studying how they played. He's clearly a very dedicated individual.

Originally from Okayama Prefecture, Tsukuda joined FROM Software in 1998. Having been involved with the production of *Armored Core: Master Of Arena* as a planner, Tsukuda then went on to produce *Frame Gride* for the Dreamcast (one of the console's first online titles in Japan). He now plays an active role in producing the *Armored Core* series, having been the main producer for *Armored Core 3* and its sequel *Armored Core 3: Silent Line*.

Strangely, for a man who creates huge fighting robots (or mecha, as they're known in Japan), one of Tsukuda's main artistic influences is the Spaghetti Western movie, with its gunfights and gritty hand-to-hand combat. You can see these influences quite clearly in his *Armored Core* games. Rather than rely on the mecha genre of anime, special care has been taken to let the *Armored Core* series have its own realistic and battle-hardened angle. According to Tsukuda, it's this individuality, combined with the amount of freedom the game gives the user, that has ensured its popularity. "I think *Armored Core* enabled Japanese people to play games using mecha that they liked right from the beginning," he says. "I think it was great that people came to realise that you built the mecha you operated, not just operated the character you liked. I attach a greater level of importance to increasing the freedom and expanding the user's playing style."

Tsukuda's mindset has been clearly displayed in the series' latest incarnation. "In *Silent Line*, we increased the number of new parts to around four hundred – double that of the previous game," he says. "Now, the player can be more particular about the customisation of their mecha than ever before. In general, I enjoy making games that allow the player to be more creative."

Considering the importance of designing your mecha in *Armored Core*, it is hardly surprising that Tsukuda utilises the skills of mecha designer extraordinaire, Shouji Kawamori (the main mechanical designer and creator of *Macross*). Bizarrely, Kawamori only came to the project by accident. "It wasn't decided that we ask Mr Kawamori to design the mecha," says Tsukuda. "We were just looking for someone who could design and, somehow, Mr Kawamori knew about our search and said he was interested. Needless to say, Mr Kawamori is a great mecha designer and we, as a company, were thinking that it would be great if we could work with him. Now he does all the designing. Since the first conceptual designs for the original *Armored Core*, we have worked together, voicing various ideas as we went along, and that process resulted in what the games are now."

Of course, with all this creative freedom for the player, the game must remain balanced, though Tsukuda admits that this isn't always easy. "I think it is the same with any game," he says, "but the most difficult part of development would be to match the developer's ideas with the player's expectations in the most sublime way possible. I don't like to compromise, but there are exceptions or methods that are impossible to do. To realise the impossible, we squeeze out ideas together. It is a hard process but it is the most challenging and enjoyable part as well."

And it wasn't just getting the feel of the game right that proved difficult – the development process was hard work too. "At the beginning of development for the PlayStation2, some things were initially impossible to express," Tsukuda admits. "However, as we continued developing, we got used to the process and that enabled us to make the most of the available hardware." And the results speak for themselves – *Armored Core 3: Silent Line* has been a big success in Japan and should hopefully perform as well in Europe.

But considering that *Armored Core 3* pushes the PlayStation2 so hard, where does Tsukuda think the series can possibly go next? "I would like players to feel as if they were in the real world," he says. "A real battleground – that's what I am aiming for." An ambitious wish – but one that might not be as difficult to realise as you might think…

Armored Core 3 is out on 17 May for PS2 and is previewed on page 72

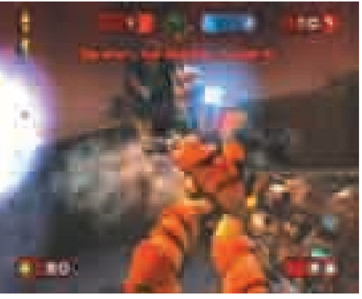


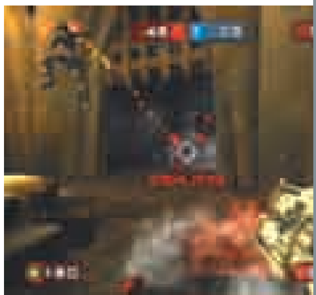
THE MOST ORGANISED CONSOLE ONLINE VENTURE YET IS WONDERFUL IN THEORY, BUT JUST HOW DOES THE XBOX LIVE LAUNCH SOFTWARE HOLD UP ON A GLOBAL SCALE?

GOING LIVE

With Xbox Live now finally finding homes on these shores, we take a look at just what games are available to the eager Xbox Live player. The bundled demo should give you a chance to sample the delights of *Moto GP*, the mediocrity of *Mech Assault* and the none-too-pleasant aroma of *Whacked* for yourself, but how do the rest of the bunch hold up? Perhaps, more importantly, what does the future hold for Xbox Live? After this promising start, Live could be heading one of two ways – one would take it to an online utopia where every game supported the network in one way or another. The likelihood of this? Slim, unfortunately, but each supported release is at least a step in the right direction.

The other route would be far less glamorous, whereby the service is used to patch bugs or fix problems that should have been sorted pre-release, a sight seen all too often in PC gaming. Although several titles have already received such updates, this scenario is mercifully unlikely so we can expect future Live updates to be building on strengths rather than addressing faults. For now though, the six official launch titles (*Moto GP* is strangely not included) go under the knife before we look at the next twelve months of Live activity. Excited? You will be…





UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP

BIG NAME, BIG GUNS… BIG DISAPPOINTMENT? NO CHANCE

Despite experiencing a little slowdown in split-screen multiplayer, we always had faith that the Live side of *Unreal* would not disappoint. Sure enough, strapping on the Communicator and booting up the machine is the last thing we remember before coming to several hours later with sore thumbs, empty stomachs and an extraordinarily large number of frags to our carefully chosen online name. It's not like *Championship* is the best example of its genre – not by a long shot with the likes of *TimeSplitters 2* still flying off shelves. It's more about the enjoyment and the simplicity of the whole affair.

Chances are the System Link potential of Free Radical's shooter and *Halo* (among others) are not put to maximum use in your daily lives, but with Live the same level of interaction is effortlessly recreated almost perfectly. Almost? There's still a lot to be said for casting a smug grin to a friend after a particularly devious kill. While Live play doesn't claim to be a substitute for this interaction, it's an entirely different experience – even just getting used to talking into a headset and keeping a straight face is hard enough. The final result may not be incredible but it is fun, frantic and a respectable Live launch title to boot.

VERDICT 8/10
A GREAT SIGN OF THINGS TO COME

"THE FINAL RESULT MAY NOT BE INCREDIBLE, BUT UNREAL IS A FUN, FRANTIC AND RESPECTABLE LIVE TITLE"





CAPCOM VS SNK 2 EO LIVE

AN ONLINE 2D BEAT-'EM-UP? HAVE OUR PRAYERS BEEN ANSWERED?

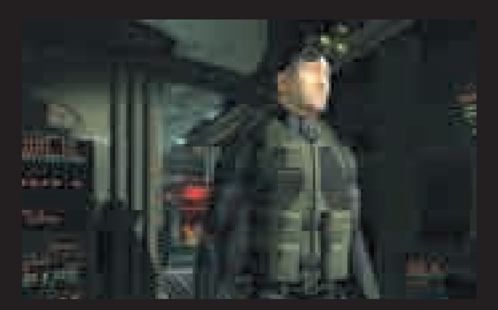
In a game – nay, a genre – where timing is so crucial, anything that can disrupt this timing has the unfortunate knock-on effect of disrupting the playability of the game itself. Rare as it should be in the advent of broadband gaming, lag still rears its ugly head from time to time, taking with it all semblance of balance and skill that Capcom has refined so well. It's a crying shame too, but playing against a skilled Japanese player should be tricky because of the tough competition, not simply due to a technical problem. It's a real shame that, much like the main game, the online play here is let down by a single flaw.

While it's understandable and even acceptable for some games to slow down or judder online, this is not one of those times. And if we can't be guaranteed a smooth ride, we'll pass for now. This gem of a game was flawed ever since *EO*-ism was mistaken for a good idea, but this really takes the biscuit – another great innovation is rendered as good as unplayable by a technical problem. Sure, you'll have times when bouts fly by without event but the lag problem is always just around the corner. Try it at your own peril – at least this way you can blame something other than a lack of skill for a disappointing loss.

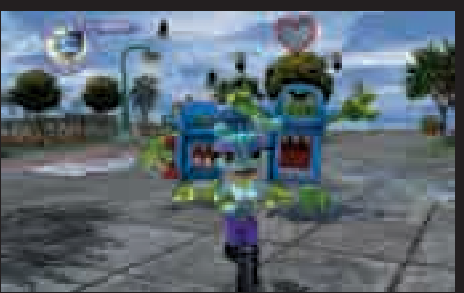
"IT'S A REAL SHAME THAT, MUCH LIKE THE MAIN GAME, THE ONLINE PLAY IS LET DOWN BY A SINGLE FLAW"

VERDICT 4/10
LAG BRINGS AN UNWELCOME ELEMENT OF CHANCE

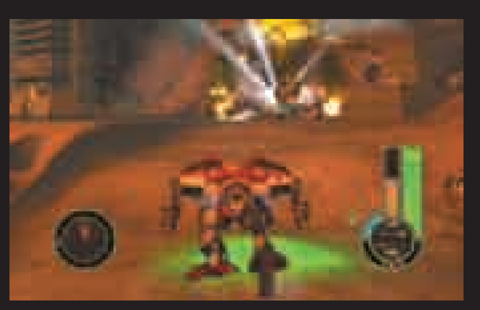
DOWNLOAD THIS THERE'S MORE TO LIVE THAN JUST ONLINE GAMING…



In a good sign of things to come, *Splinter Cell* offers players the chance to download additional levels and content to lengthen its lifespan. While there may not be a great deal available at the moment, availability will surely increase on the back of the success of a brave few titles that dare to go Live from the start.



Bored of running around collecting presents? On top of its random level generator, new areas for *Toejam & Earl III* are available to download via Xbox Live. A word with the 'big manly man' in any of the game's areas is all it takes to start your journey to fresh pastures. It's that easy even Earl could do it…



Mech Assault grabs the Live bull by both horns, offering downloadable extra mechs and arenas as well as online play. While the Live play may not be great, putting the online system to such good use is commendable. The new mechs and maps are excellent – we hope the quality of all online content is this good.

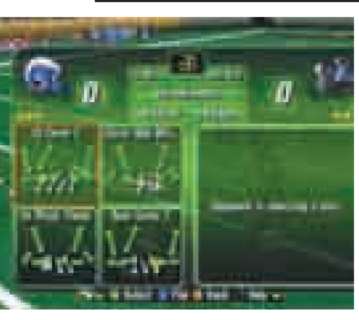
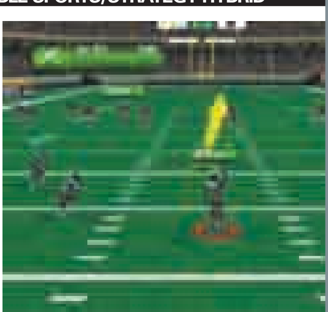
LAUNCH TITLES

NFL FEVER 2003

OVERLY PADDED AMERICANS IN SEMI-STRATEGIC SHOCKER

***Fever* managed to surprise us on many levels.** Firstly, we were able to make sense of and enjoy a sport which we barely understand – a good start by any standards. Secondly, it somehow manages to turn one of America's toughest sports into more a battle of wits than anything else – picking plays and strategies is more important than running quickly and hurting people, almost turning the game into a strangely enjoyable puzzle game. Chess in padding, if you will. While this won't be the sort of thing for everyone, games like this tend to develop a fair following – if nothing else, you can always be sure of an eager opponent across the water waiting for a game.

VERDICT 6/10
A SURPRISINGLY ENJOYABLE SPORTS/STRATEGY HYBRID

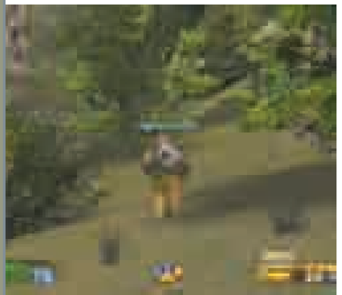
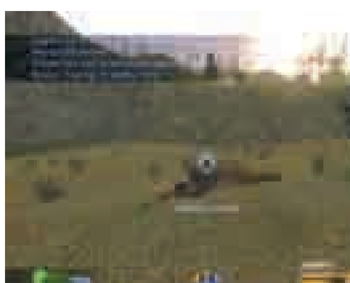
"GHOST RECON MAY BE A LITTLE ON THE PLODDING SIDE, BUT AS A HEALTHY CHANGE AND A MORE THOUGHTFUL ALTERNATIVE TO UNREAL YOU CAN'T GO FAR WRONG"

TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON

SNEAKING AROUND AND SHOOTING PEOPLE, CLANCY STYLE

If you can get around the overwhelming amount of American patriotism that goes on during games, *Ghost Recon* is one of Live's current highlights. It offers a variety of game modes for both 'every man for himself' versus play and the wealth of team play options that fare much better on Live. It may be a little on the plodding side for the *TimeSplitters* generation, but as a healthy change and a more thoughtful alternative to *Unreal*, you can't go far wrong with these online manoeuvres. At least until *Counter Strike* comes along, our silencers and flanking assaults will be put to good use thanks to Mr Clancy.

VERDICT 7/10
AN ENJOYABLE EXERCISE IN SQUAD COMBAT

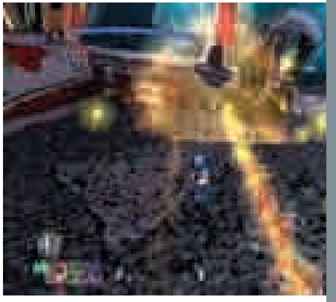
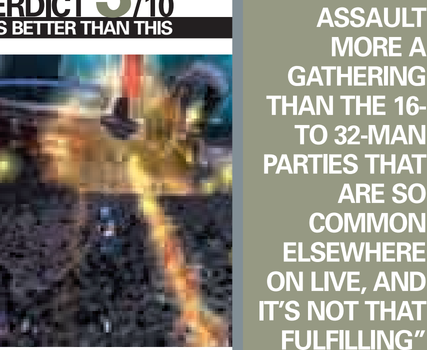



WHACKED!

AREN'T PARTY GAMES SUPPOSED TO BE FUN?

There's always one, isn't there? It's fair to say that *Whacked* is the only real stinker in the Live launch line-up. The 'hilarious' party game benefits about as much from online play as it would from sporting a £99.99 price tag. The promising (if clichéd) quiz show front end is soon lost to a random game of four 'wacky' characters hitting each other with things – *Power Stone* this is certainly not. As an 'after the pub' online multiplayer this would have been great, but is ultimately a missed opportunity. In brief bursts, *Whacked* can almost seem enjoyable for a minute or so, but since the demo that comes with the Live Starter Kit can provide this, you can take your £40 elsewhere with peace of mind.

VERDICT 3/10
LIVE NEEDS BETTER THAN THIS

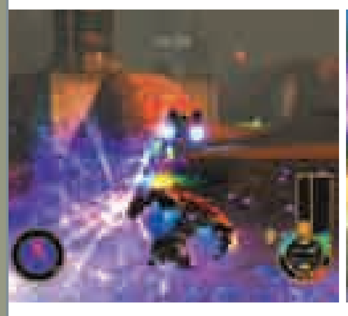
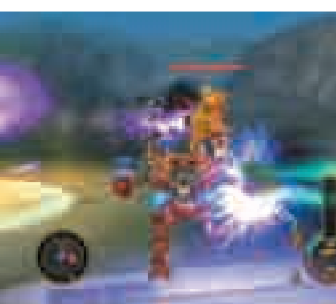
"ONLY EIGHT PLAYERS MAKE MECH ASSAULT MORE A GATHERING THAN THE 16- TO 32-MAN PARTIES THAT ARE SO COMMON ELSEWHERE ON LIVE, AND IT'S NOT THAT FULFILLING"

MECH ASSAULT

EVERYBODY LOVES BIG ROBOTS BREAKING THINGS, RIGHT? RIGHT?

Taking *Mech Assault* online wasn't quite the blast we were hoping for. While the single player game was a touch disappointing both in terms of length and variety, we were hoping that the Live experience would be a little more fulfilling. Sadly, we weren't to be satisfied. At only eight players, it's more a gathering than the 16- to 32-man parties that are so common elsewhere on Live and it's not a particularly enthralling one either – we'll be in the kitchen with the cool kids, thanks. If you go into it expecting little more than a slower, less enjoyable alternative to *Unreal* you'll minimise damage, but those with higher hopes might just end up on the wrong end of a large serving of disappointment.

VERDICT 5/10
DECIDEDLY AVERAGE MASS DESTRUCTION

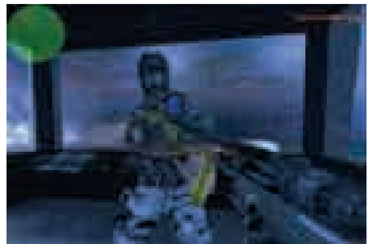
FORTHCOMING ATTRACTIONS

COUNTER STRIKE

FLASHBANG? CHECK. SILENCED MP5? CHECK. XBOX LIVE COMMUNICATOR? UM…

It goes without saying that Xbox Live is going to need some big guns behind it in order to truly take off, and they don't come much bigger than *Counter Strike*. The aging PC squad-based shooter still plays like a dream to this day and with both this console debut and a new standalone PC game imminent, neutralising the terrorist threat is growing more and more popular. The Communicator lends itself wonderfully to this style of game, and provided we see a game that replicates and builds on the strengths of its PC relative, Xbox owners will be in for a real treat later in the year.



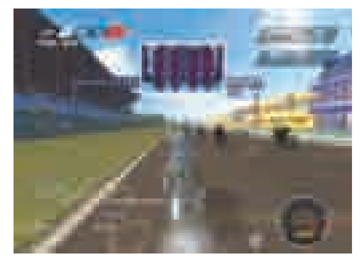


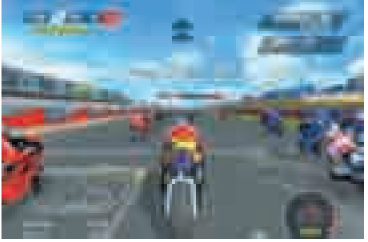
"XBOX LIVE NEEDS SOME BIG GUNS AND THEY DON'T COME MUCH BIGGER THAN COUNTER STRIKE"

MOTO GP 2

MORE BIKE RACING ACTION? DON'T MIND IF WE DO…

While you can now take your two-wheeled partner online courtesy of the *Moto GP* demo disc that comes with the Live Starter Pack, the world still waits with baited breath to see what can be improved for the sequel. With integrated Live support, this eagerly anticipated follow-up should be snapped up by many would-be bikers on the strength of the original demo alone, and we certainly can't wait to get back out on the track. Until then, at least we have the first offering to fuel our racing addiction. We knew unlocking everything would be worthwhile in the long run.





"WE CERTAINLY CAN'T WAIT TO GET BACK OUT ON THE TRACK WITH MOTO GP 2"

TRUE FANTASY LIVE ONLINE

XBOX GOES ALL MMORPG ON US AND IT SURE LOOKS PRETTY

For those who enjoy their games with a little more depth, a lot more commitment and a smattering of orcs for good measure, *True Fantasy Live Online* is shaping up to be the first respectable RPG effort for the Microsoft console. Not satisfied with just being first, *TFLO* is going all-out to be a massively epic online experience the likes of which has barely even been attempted on a console. With those clever chaps at Level 5 working on the graphical aspect, you can be sure of a visual feast as you battle, communicate or simply coexist with players around the world.



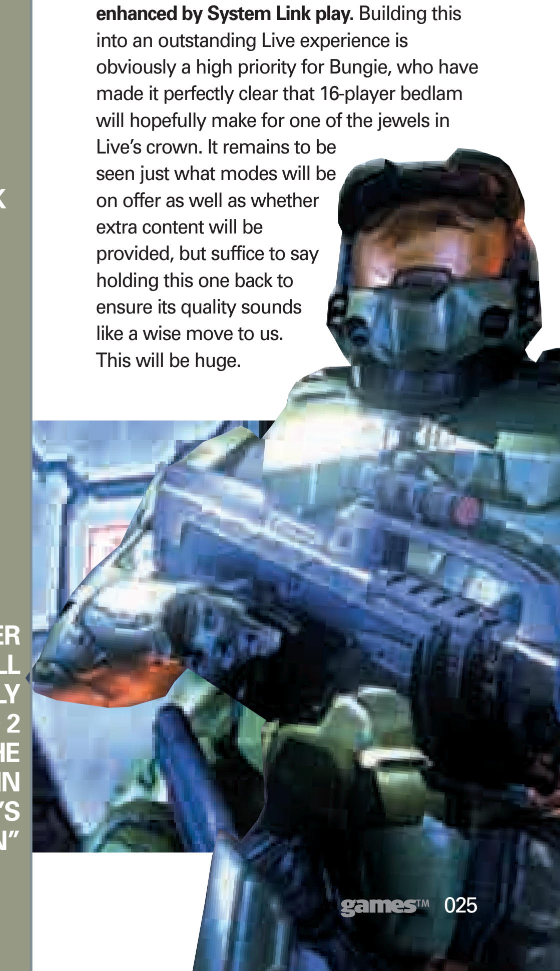




HALO 2

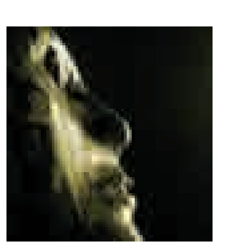
DELAYED BUT NOT FORGOTTEN – THE CHIEF GOES LIVE IN 2004

While *Halo*'s split-screen multiplayer may have left us slightly cold, there can be no denying that the multi-Chief frivolity was greatly enhanced by System Link play. Building this into an outstanding Live experience is obviously a high priority for Bungie, who have made it perfectly clear that 16-player bedlam will hopefully make for one of the jewels in Live's crown. It remains to be seen just what modes will be on offer as well as whether extra content will be provided, but suffice to say holding this one back to ensure its quality sounds like a wise move to us. This will be huge.



"16-PLAYER BEDLAM WILL HOPEFULLY MAKE HALO 2 ONE OF THE JEWELS IN XBOX LIVE'S CROWN"

games™ USA REPORT



LETTER FROM AMERICA

WITH YOUR FRIENDLY EX-PATRIOT, THE SHAPE



"THOUSANDS OF LOVELESS HOPEFULS HAVE REALISED THAT THE SIMS ONLINE IS SIMPLY THE WORLD'S MOST EXPENSIVE CHATROOM"

For the second year running, citizens of this nation I have made my home spent more on videogames than on movie tickets. Think about that. If you'd said such a future was possible back in, say, the Amiga's heyday, they'd have suspected you were using your massive Wall Street cellphone a little too often. But it's happened – we've beaten Tinseltown. Of course, your ordinary casual gamer wouldn't know about it, as softcos and retailers keep peddling their wares in ever more urgent ways, like they were having trouble breaking even. Two stages of their plan are apparent: 1) they intend to sell more games with better-than-ever pre-order incentives, and 2) they'd like it if you kept paying for your software indefinitely, thank you very much, via online fees.

In the case of pre-order freebies, nobody loses. The most valuable of these in recent memory was, of course, the bundling of N64 conversions *Ocarina Of Time* and its *Master Quest* incarnation with GameCube headliner *Zelda: The Wind Waker* (and one naughty chain even offered the bonus disc right away upon receipt of your pre-order deposit, weeks before the main game shipped). Electronics Boutique has taken the reins itself, promising limited edition Lara DVDs with all pre-orders of the next *Tomb Raider* title, although it's usually publishers who decide to tart up their own products. *Vexx* and *Batman: Dark Tomorrow* each came with pre-order-only comic books starring the respective lead characters (though it'll take more than a little comic to make either of these howlers worth $50). Xbox heavyweight *Brute Force* is currently boosting its pre-sales appeal with a '*Halo* Companion' DVD full of digital bonuses like wallpaper and concept art plus screens and footage of *Halo 2*. Smart marketing that one, considering the almost total crossover audience between both of the big-name shooters on Xbox. I can't say any of these represents as good value as when I bought a box of Cinnamon Toast Crunch cereal today and got a free DVD of *The Muppets Take Manhattan* inside (I didn't even have to pre-order), but you can't argue with something for nothing.

The intensifying push toward online fees is a little tougher to deal with. Big business is determined: free play is on the way out! Question: How do you make more money people to play them. An important milestone was recently passed when *Phantasy Star Online* was released here for Xbox. Among the great new 'features' was the need to have a working, paid-for Xbox Live account to play the game in any form – even offline. Hence, if you don't live in a broadband zone then you can't play *PSO*, whether by yourself or over the Net. If you do have broadband in the house, then it's $8.95 on top of your Xbox Live fee each month to play the game, in addition to the $50 you paid for the Live kit itself.

Sony started soft – no charge to play PS2's killer online app *SOCOM* – but has now shown its true colours with substantial



fees for *EverQuest Online Adventures* and they're selling it hard. Kids unable to sign up using a credit card can buy pay-as-you-go-type top-up cards for $9.99 a shot (feeding their *EQA Online* habit with thirty-day doses) while CG-enhanced TV ads make it look like playing this game with your friends is 'The Cool Thing To Do'. Don't be surprised if you come home one day to find that little Jimmy's sold mum's jewellery – and he's wheeling the TV to the door as you walk in. Sony should be off to a tearing start: the Network Adapter, which has only just reappeared in stores having been permanently sold out with the huge popularity of *SOCOM*, is being sold this very moment with a free (yes, free) copy of *EverQuest*. Give 'em their first hit for free…

The pay-to-play hook doesn't always take hold of course, but by the time thousands of loveless hopefuls realised *The Sims Online* was simply the world's most expensive chatroom, how many $10 direct deposits do you suppose had made their way to EA's Zurich account? Enough to keep producer Gordon Walton in Cinnamon Toast Crunch for a long, long time, no doubt.

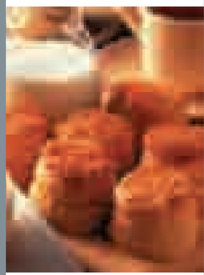
Cheers



Want to play Xbox Live in the States? Better start saving. And get some broadband access.

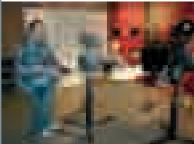
MISS ABOUT BRITAIN…

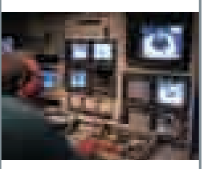
Potato scones



LOVE ABOUT AMERICA…

Public Access TV





AMERIKAAN

PRODUCTS, PLACES, SERVICES AND EVENTS FROM THE LAND OF THE FREE

ENCORE PRESENTATION

There are no repeats on network TV anymore, but you'll have many opportunities to view 'encore presentations' of the shows you missed. Handy that.





US MULTIFORMAT TOP TEN

	Title	Publisher	Format
1	Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	Rockstar	PS2
2	DragonBall Z: Budokai	Infogrames	PS2
3	Madden NFL 2003	EA	Multi
4	Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	Ubi Soft	Xbox
5	The Lord Of The Rings: The Two Towers	EA	Multi
6	Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past	Nintendo	GBA
7	Yu-Gi-Oh! Eternal Duelist Soul	Konami	GBA
8	James Bond 007: Nightfire	EA	Multi
9	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	Activision	Multi
10	Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance	Midway	Multi

(Updated 14/03/03)



Well, that's quite a thing – this month's chart is exactly the same as the last one. Maybe no-one bought any games at all. Or are US gamers just too predictable?

WANT ANY QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY THE SHAPE? THEN DROP HIM A LINE AT: theshape@comcast.net … HE MIGHT LISTEN, IF YOU'RE LUCKY.



KONGETSU*

WITH JAPANESE CORRESPONDENT OLLIE BARDER

"THE JAPANESE UNDERSTAND MECHA – AFTER ALL, IT'S BEEN PART OF THEIR POP CULTURE FOR NEARLY 50 YEARS"

Big stompy robots are very popular in Japan. Since the Sixties, they've graced the Japanese airwaves and encouraged successive generations to snap up highly lucrative toys. It's verging on a pop cultural heirloom, unique to Japan. From an animé and manga perspective, mechanical creations work in and of themselves – despite their cipher-based nature, 'mecha' are self-serving, they merely have to exist. In games, however, it's a different matter entirely. The mecha genre of gaming is an offshoot from their popularity within animé and manga – so technically, it isn't a gaming 'genre', more of a definition that the game contains mecha. As you might guess, this leads to all sorts of problems.

The Japanese understand mecha – after all, they've had it integrally linked to their pop culture for nigh on half a century – whereas we (as English types) don't. Both *Virtual On* and *Armored Core* are third-person mecha combat games; they're both games that contain mecha, but to classify both games as having the same game mechanics simply because they're in the same genre is just plain wrong. Sadly though, this is exactly what happens. Usually, the name of the genre (sport, platform, puzzle and so on) indicates what game mechanic is at work. With the term 'mecha', however, the game mechanic isn't described accurately, just the fact that it contains mecha. In Japan, they know the difference. Abroad, however, superb games get lumped with rubbish ones just because they all contain robots.

Virtual On Force is popular because, to a certain extent, it's a good game. Admittedly, it does borrow from the huge mecha pop culture catalogue, but the game is ultimately what draws punters back. Cynics argue that it wouldn't be popular if it didn't contain mecha; this is clearly wrong simply due to the wealth of godawful mecha-based games out there that don't do so well.

However, the more astute will realise that animé tie-ins are often the bane of the discerning gamer. Almost any of the *Macross* games currently available are catastrophically bad, yet they sell solidly (initially, anyway). It is important to understand that they sell simply because of the animé they represent rather then because of the actual game itself. Much like the numerous terrible *Bond* tie-ins (bar *GoldenEye*, obviously), they may sell well but their quality is universally accepted as being sub par. The same can be said for some mecha games in Japan. The Japanese won't put up with rubbish – I just wish we gaijin didn't either (because as far as I'm concerned, anyone who says *MechAssault* is 'good' requires a frontal lobotomy).

Anyway, the fact that people actually play *Virtual On* in this wondrous land shows that all is not lost. I just wish they wouldn't kick my arse on it so frequently. Best TwinStick forward, eh?

Kind regards

Ollie Barder



TEACH YOURSELF JAPANESE

LESSON FIVE: RIDING THE TRAIN

… made onegaishimasu	I'd like to buy a ticket to…
Kyori wa mijikainoni yakeni takai desune.	That's awfully expensive for such a short journey.
Korewa … iki no desya desuka?	Is this the train to…?
Mateyo – machigatta densya ni noccyattakana?	Hold on – am I on the wrong train?
Oh… kuso	Oh… shit

JAPANESE MULTIFORMAT TOP TEN

	Title	Publisher	Format
1	Final Fantasy X-2	Square	PS2
2	Zelda: A Link To The Past	Nintendo	GBA
3	Dynasty Warriors 4	Koei	PS2
4	Virtua Fighter 4 Evolution	SEGA	PS2
5	Taiko No Tatsujin	Namco	PS2
6	Star Ocean 3: Till The End Of Time	Enix	PS2
7	Pokémon Sapphire	Nintendo	GBA
8	Pokémon Ruby	Nintendo	GBA
9	Kaidou Battle	Genki	PS2
10	DragonBall Z	Bandai	PS2

(Dengeki Console Game Ranking Top 50, week ending 16/03/03)


Final Fantasy X-2

Zelda: ALTTP/Four Swords

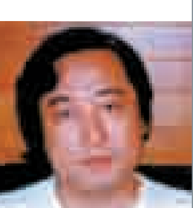
Dynasty Warriors 4

KNOW THY MECHA DESIGNER

The people who invent these mechanical beasts are an eclectic bunch and are generally highly creative and a wee bit loopy. If you're planning on showing off your mecha knowledge next time you're in the pub, these are the names you really should know. Then all your mates will think you've 'got' mecha and will no doubt think you're terribly sophisticated.

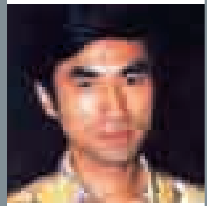
• KUNIO OKUNWARA

Original mechanical designer for *Kagaku Ninjatai Gatchaman* (or *Battle Of The Planets* to the rest of us) and *Kidou Senshi Gundam*. Often regarded as the father of 'real robot' (read: vulnerable robot) design, he is highly respected and earns vast sums of moola accordingly (mainly because he still supervises the design for *Gundam*, a particularly lucrative franchise). Recently he has worked on the original design work for Takara's *J-Phoenix* series of games as well as *G-Breaker*, a turn-based mecha tactics game by Bandai.


Kunio Okunwara: The creator of vulnerable mechs. Careful now.

• SHOJI KAWAMORI

Originally educated at Keio University, Kawamori is a frighteningly clever individual. Almost as influential as Okunwara, he is most famous for his work on *Chojikyu Yosai Macross* and its subsequent spin-offs (apart from *Macross II: Lovers Again*). Games wise, he's been responsible for the design work for FROM Software's *Armored Core* series of games and Polyphony Digital's *Omega Boost*. He also recently designed one of the new Aibo's for Sony.


Shoji Kawamori: Brain the size of a planet, apparently.

• HAJIME KATOKI

An incredibly talented artist and a bit of a cheeky chap too. Broke into the industry in 1988 with the jaw-dropping *Gundam Sentinel*, since then he has been incredibly successful and understandably popular. In 1995, he was approached by Juro Watari for *Cyber Troopers Virtual On* and has worked studiously on the series ever since.


Hajime Katoki: The future's so bright he's got to wear shades…

> "I WANT TO GIVE THE PLAYER A CHANCE TO CREATE ANOTHER VERSION OF HIM OR HERSELF, WITH THEIR OWN WORLD AND HISTORY INSIDE THE GAME"
>
> *SATOSHI KANEMATSU, PRODUCER, TECMO*

SATOSHI KANEMATSU

TECMO

The hardened gamers among us might consider it the gaming equivalent of grave robbing (in both a moral and actual sense), but there's little doubt that dragging successful games from the 'golden era' kicking and screaming into the present day is the big thing at the moment. Obviously, some important industry bigwigs have decided that if it did well back then, it'll do well now; all it takes is a bit of next-generation spit and polish and a whole lot of 'do you remember?' marketing, and then the money practically prints itself.

Of course, the games that usually get selected are age-old classics that everyone remembers – we can cite *Shinobi*, *Metroid*, *Wolfenstein 3D* and *Phantasy Star* as recent examples without having to think too hard. So if we mentioned *Rygar* (or *Argus No Senshi*, if you happen to be Japanese), would you know what we were on about? Maybe not. But we wouldn't blame you – Tecmo's 1986 side-scrolling slash-'em-up isn't exactly the first game that springs to mind when you ask people to reel off their ten favourite arcade games of all time. With that being the case then, you have to wonder why Tecmo waited so long before resurrecting a game that not many people may remember anyway.

"It's not so much that we waited," says Satoshi Kanematsu, producer of *Rygar: The Legendary Adventure*, "but rather, there was no-one who truly longed to remake the game for the last 17 years. I truly believe that there's no point in making a game unless the person behind it passionately wants to do so. With *Rygar*, there wasn't anyone like that… until I came along, of course."

However, with passion comes responsibility – after all, the last thing you want to do is make fans of the original angry by turning the game into something completely different. Thankfully, this new version of *Rygar* has more than enough of the first game in it to keep everyone happy.

"Unfortunately, none of the people who worked on the original arcade game are on our team," admits Kanematsu-san, "although we did receive advice from the original development staff during production. However, we don't think of *Rygar* as just a remake – it's a brand new title that was created with new inspirations. It's just that essential elements from the first game such as the Diskarmor and the background, as well as the deep-rooted soul of the game, happen to have been carried over in the process."

Indeed, the whole setting of *Rygar* – one that mixes ancient Greek and Roman influences with a demonic edge – is something that comes across very strongly in the follow-up. Not surprisingly, this is something that was done on purpose – a fact that makes Kanematsu-san quite proud. "We used actual architecture as motifs for many of the game areas," he says. "For example, Arcadia, one of the most impressive stages in *Rygar* for me, was based on an actual monument. Also, certain monsters that appeared in Greek mythology have inspired the characters in the game, although we've added some unique touches of our own."

Just as Kanematsu-san and his team put a lot of effort into making the game look right in relation to the ancient theme, particular attention has also been paid to the musical score – especially as Kanematsu-san himself wants people to be able to "feel the game with their ears" as they play. "Rygar is an epic fantasy opera," he says, "and we didn't believe that popular modern music would suit it, so we chose a much fuller and dignified sound. We also structured the game around the classical music style with different themes, so that we could tell a complete story within the deeper layer of the music. We used a full orchestra because we couldn't get the emotion that we wanted using synthesizers, and we wanted to put feeling into the sound. We even used traditional Greek folk instruments in the recording process."

Of course, all the effort in the development process would be for nothing if the game isn't pitched right. As *Rygar* is a pseudo-sequel to a game that's over 15 years old, getting the balance right is essential; trying too hard to attract people who might remember the original may put off those who don't, but deviating too far from the original would have fans up in arms. "*Rygar: The Legendary Adventure* is a completely new game that gets its inspiration from the original," says Kanematsu-san, "but other games like *Devil May Cry* have also influenced us; in particular, in the area of the game engine. Essentially, we have tried to target modern game players – especially those who like action games – regardless of whether they are familiar with the original game or not." Hopefully, the gaming public will agree with him when the game hits the shelves.

Rygar: The Legendary Adventure is out on 16 May for PS2 and is reviewed on page 102.



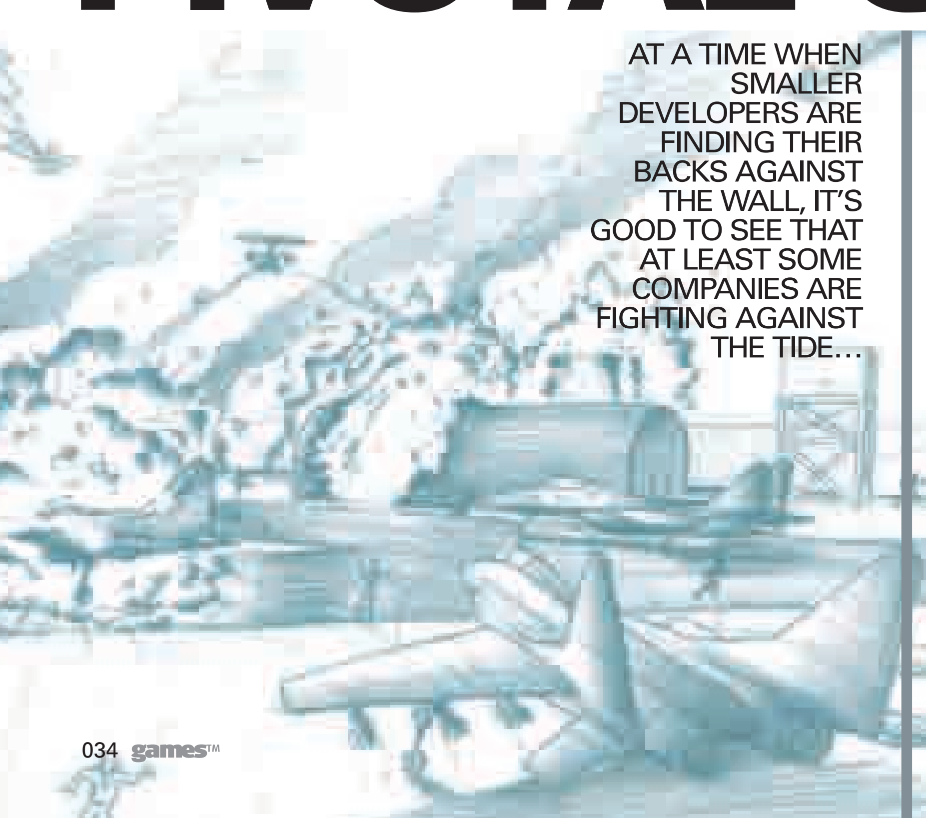
REMAKING GAMES THAT DID WELL OVER A DECADE AGO IS NOTHING NEW, BUT TRYING TO RESURRECT AN ARCADE TITLE THAT A LOT OF PEOPLE DON'T EVEN REMEMBER? NOW THERE'S A COMPLETELY NEW CHALLENGE…

COMMUNITY

EVERY ISSUE, **games™** GOES BEHIND THE SCENES WITH A DEVELOPER. THIS MONTH WE PUT ON OUR FATIGUES TO VISIT PIVOTAL – THE CREATORS OF CONFLICT: DESERT STORM.

Rustic buildings seem to be all the rage with developers today…

PIVOTAL GAMES



AT A TIME WHEN SMALLER DEVELOPERS ARE FINDING THEIR BACKS AGAINST THE WALL, IT'S GOOD TO SEE THAT AT LEAST SOME COMPANIES ARE FIGHTING AGAINST THE TIDE…

Starting your own games development company from scratch is a daunting prospect for anyone, but having to pick up the pieces from one that's gone under must be a right bitch. Most people might not even want to bother, perhaps moving into other areas of the industry, but for the small number who are so passionate about what they do that they have to get back up and try again, the uphill struggle must be terrible. Nevertheless, that's exactly the challenge that faced the ex-employees of Eidos-owned Pumpkin Studios when the publisher pulled the plug. Having already moved out from under the flailing wing of now defunct MicroProse to start anew, the team faced another difficult task in getting the ball rolling once more as Pivotal Games.

"Effectively, we had to start all over again," says Jim Bambra, managing director of Pivotal. "With a hard-core team of 15 personnel we set up Pivotal Games and worked on *Conflict: Desert Storm* with just our redundancy payments to fund us through the concept stage. Thankfully, the product was signed after three months and the rest, as they say, is history."

Indeed it is – with the firm's first game now having surpassed a million sales across PS2, Xbox and PC (and the GameCube version now available), it's clear that it has fallen squarely on its feet. That said, it's only fair to expect the constant changes in ownership and management to take their

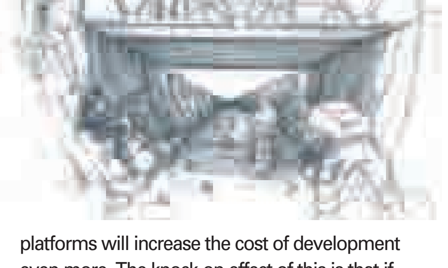
Pivotal Games has grown considerably since being set up, going from a core staff of 15 to nearly 50 employees. Despite being a small developer, it already has three other titles on the go.

Pivotal's next *Conflict* outing will see the boys push further into the Gulf, as well as deep into the jungles of Vietnam.

toll on the team; in particular, the thought that they are now pretty working for themselves (through the financial support of the Kaboom Studios group). As far as Pivotal is concerned though, it's not as big a deal as you might think. "I don't think that the change has been hard in terms of the day-to-day running of the studio," insists Nick Cook, art director at Pivotal. "Although the name has changed, and we have moved from what was Eidos' studio in the South West to become Pivotal Games and part of the Kaboom Group, the guys that have made this transition from what was originally an internal team at MicroProse to today's current set-up are all passionate about the roles they perform."

Having a core team of people who worked together for nearly a decade has obviously worked in Pivotal's favour as it's allowed the team to bond despite the hardship. With many small companies feeling the pinch as costs rocket and publishers become more cagey about who they offer projects to, it's this experience that has no doubt helped Pivotal get into the position its currently enjoying.

"Things are definitely getting tougher," says Alex McLean, Pivotal's director of technology. "The cost to develop for new platforms has spiralled dramatically, and I envisage that the step up to the next-gen



platforms will increase the cost of development even more. The knock-on effect of this is that if development teams don't have a proven track record on delivering code on time, publishers are reluctant to sign up projects they are not completely comfortable with. Inevitably, it's the bigger studios that tend to get their projects signed – but it still takes time even then."

Even with this being the case, Pivotal has managed to get off to a good start; with three games already in development following *Conflict: Desert Storm,* and the staff count having risen to a more healthy 48, the company's status has been upgraded in the eyes of the industry from 'nearly dead' to 'frisky'. Starting out was obviously the big hurdle though, if only because the company's first title was being touted across three platforms. Although some of the team already had

"WHEN WE TAKE PEOPLE ON, WE LOOK FOR THE SAME QUALITIES IN THE NEW RECRUITS THAT ARE THERE IN OUR EXISTING MEMBERS OF STAFF"

NICK COOK, PIVOTAL GAMES



Big men, even bigger weapons – just because they're supposed to be a stealth unit, doesn't mean they can't blow stuff up.



ANCIENT HISTORY

Although Pivotal Games is a relatively new company, many of the people working for the firm have been in the games industry a long time – they've developed over 60 games between them.

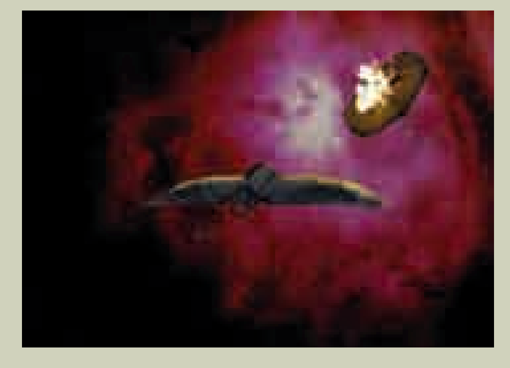
FORMULA ONE GP AMIGA (1991)

Having formerly worked as Head of Design at MicroProse, Jim Bambra was one of the people responsible for Geoff Crammond's original masterpiece, *Formula One Grand Prix* – the game that revolutionised the racing genre at the time.



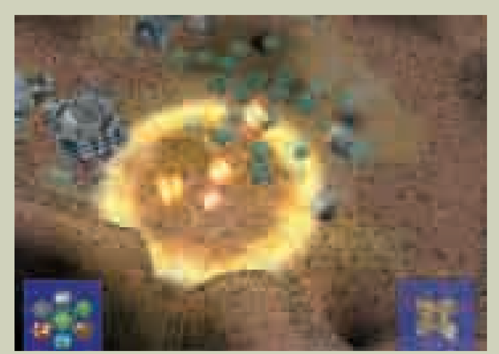
X-COM PSONE, PC (1995-1998)

Nick Cook also started his career at MicroProse, working as Art Manager on several games from the *X-COM* series. Despite constant evolution over the years, the real-time tactical squad-based combat and realistic combat manoeuvres that attracted many PC owners were never really lost.

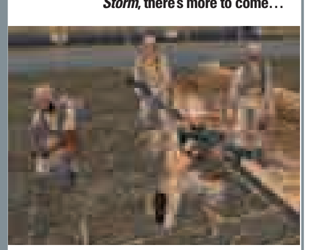


WARZONE 2100 PC (1998)

The one and only game to come out of Pumpkin Studios (shortly before it broke away and became Pivotal Games) was *Warzone 2100* – a real-time 3D strategy game that was easily compared to Westwood's *Command & Conquer* series.



Although Pivotal has had a good start with *Conflict: Desert Storm*, there's more to come…



experience of developing for the PSone, the generational gap from one console to another will always present developers with new problems. "We do not see the transition from one console to a next-gen platform as a difficult one," says Alex. "The major difference between developing for PC and consoles is the fact that the console manufacturers have a pretty stringent set of guidelines in place that we have to follow. This means that there are extra demands on our coders to ensure that logos, splash screens and the appropriate commands appear on screen at the correct time. The PC is a different beast to deal with, and there are so many variables that appear from manufacturer to manufacturer. The changes that have occurred here have been ones of technological advancements in speed, sound effects and the like, and the pressure is on the team to ensure that the finished product exploits these to the full, where possible."

While developing for a home console with its own restrictions might present problems of one kind, translating a game which represents a genre that is predominately PC-based onto a console is a different matter altogether. Not only do you have to consider the contrasts in audience demographic (presenting a more mass-market game while appealing to squad-based action fans), but there's the small matter of control methods and time management to take into account. Despite issues such as tight deadlines on game development these days, and publishers wanting a swift turnaround for as little outlay as possible, Jim admits he wasn't that worried when it came to *Conflict: Desert Storm*. "Ultimately, games development is all about having a great design and turning that into a highly detailed and achievable schedule backed up by highly talented and motivated programmers and artists who then turn the design into a fantastic game," he says. "I won't pretend that it was easy, but we're very confident in our abilities. With *Conflict: Desert Storm* we wanted to create a game that was fun but also very involving to play. With four characters to control, the interface has to be elegant and very easy to pick up and play. It had to work on a joypad and allow you to control multiple characters at the same time. But at the same time the game has to let you recover from your mistakes; that meant no one-shot kills, so you could always back out from difficult situations. We also introduced a state between alive and dead, where unconscious characters bleed to death over a three-minute period and players could to heal them to get them back in the game. This idea was generally loved but, for some reason, one PC magazine thought it was the worst idea ever."

Obviously, the success of *Conflict: Desert Storm* has surpassed anything Pivotal could have hoped for when it began work on the game – in fact, the game has already

"WE PRETTY MUCH KNOW WHAT IS AND IS NOT ACHIEVABLE WITHIN THE TIME LIMITS WE'VE BEEN SET BY THE PUBLISHER"

ALEX MCLEAN, PIVOTAL GAMES





Left – JIM BAMBRA, Managing Director
Previously: Head of Design, MicroProse; Managing Director, Pumpkin Studios

Right – ALEX MCLEAN, Director of Technology
Previously: Software Engineer, MicroProse; Head of Software Engineering, Pumpkin Studios

Not Pictured – NICK COOK, Director of Development
Previously: Art Manager, MicroProse; Art Director, Pumpkin Studios

The arcade nature of *Conflict: Desert Storm* helped make it a success on various consoles as well as the PC.

managed to spawn two sequels that are currently in the works for publisher SCi. Of course, you could argue that just because a game does well, that doesn't mean it can sustain an entire series; in the rush to get out more titles along the same theme, there could be a risk of the whole thing running out of steam. Thankfully though, Pivotal doesn't believe that will be the case for a while. "We think that there will always be scope to develop an entertaining gaming experience based around conflict itself," says Nick. "You only have to look back over the last 15 years of computer gaming to see how many products have been launched that are based around combat and conflict. We see the *Conflict* series as an ever-expanding game experience that will continue to entertain players for years to come. We have lots of great ideas at the moment and in many ways, *Desert Storm* was really only the first step."

So it looks as though the future for Pivotal is a bright one, even if their past has been turbulent. "I am very proud of many things," admits Jim, "and the way in which the studio works on a daily basis never ceases to amaze me – right from the start of development on *Warzone 2100* through to the closure of Pumpkin, then the willingness of the 15 staff who were prepared to work on a new game with no guarantees when Pivotal was set up. There are even those 70-80 hour weeks that everyone puts in as we come to the last three months of a project… these things make me proud. To have a million plus seller, with the first title though, from what effectively is a new studio – that speaks volumes about the people that work at Pivotal Games."



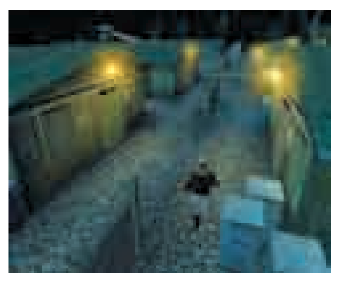
"THERE WILL ALWAYS BE SCOPE TO MAKE GAMES BASED AROUND CONFLICT"

NICK COOK, PIVOTAL GAMES

DISTANT FUTURE

THE GREAT ESCAPE
(PS2, XBOX, GC, PC)

Based on the classic 'always on at Christmas' movie of the same name, *The Great Escape* sees you assume control of Steve McQueen himself and three other prisoners in an third-person action-based attempt to break out of the dreaded Stalag Luft III POW camp.



CONFLICT: DESERT STORM 2 (PS2, XBOX, GC, PC)

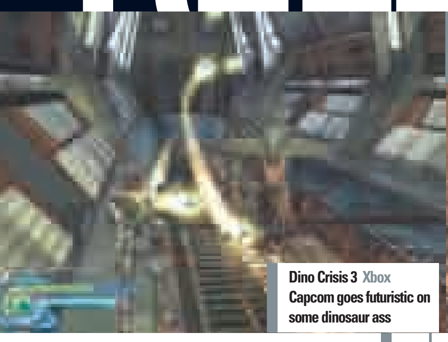
Originally named *Conflict: Desert Sabre*, *C:DS2* is planned to be an out-and-out sequel to the first game and continues the theme of US Delta Force and SAS troops being sent into Iraq during the Desert Shield mission. Expect to see this one invading towards the end of the year.

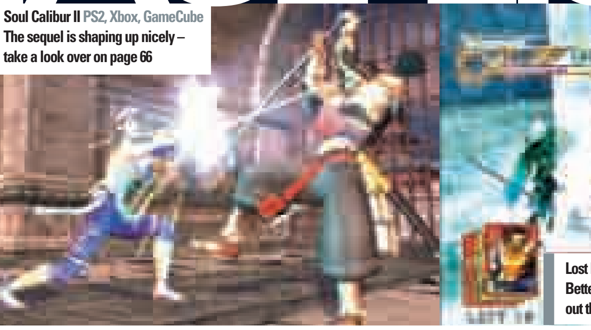


CONFLICT: MISSING PRESUMED DEAD
(PS2, XBOX, PC)

Yes, it's another instalment of the *Conflict* series – although this time it's based on the Vietnam War and follows the story of four US soldiers who become cut off behind enemy lines during the 1968 Tet Offensive. Think *Conflict: Desert Storm* mixed with *Apocalypse Now* and you'll get an idea of what to expect in August 2004.

RELEASE LISTS


Dino Crisis 3 Xbox
Capcom goes futuristic on some dinosaur ass


Soul Calibur II PS2, Xbox, GameCube
The sequel is shaping up nicely – take a look over on page 66


Lost Kingdoms II GameCube
Better than the original? Check out the review on page 110



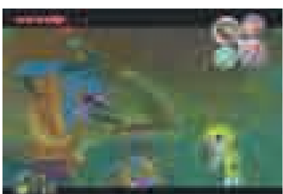


MOST PLAYED

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER

Format: GameCube
Developer: Nintendo

Oh, come on – did you really think we'd have been playing anything else for most of this month? Miyamoto-san's latest foray into Link's world might not be as revolutionary as *Ocarina Of Time*, but it's no less enjoyable – and you have to admit it looks damn lovely too.



GAME BOY ADVANCE SP

Format: Game Boy Advance SP
Developer: Nintendo

We love looking at our new SPs almost as much as we love playing them. Although several fights have broken out in the office over who has the best colour, the fact that we can finally see what's going on in *Castlevania: Circle Of The Moon* helps warm the cockles of our hearts.



XBOX LIVE

Format: Xbox
Developer: Microsoft

We've all signed up, laughed at each other's Gamertags and proceeded to open up a can of whup-ass on anyone daring enough to enter a game with us. You might not totally agree that online gaming is the way forward for videogames, but there's no doubting that Xbox Live is a darn good place to start…





PLAYSTATION2

Month	Title	Publisher	
APRIL			
25 April	Die Hard: Vendetta	Vivendi	
25 April	Mace Griffin: Bounty Hunter	Vivendi	
25 April	Moto GP 3	SCEE	
TBC	Frogger Beyond	Konami	
TBC	Futurama	SCi	
TBC	Malice: Kat's Tale	Vivendi	
TBC	Pillage	Zed Two	
TBC	Savage Skies	BigBen Interactive	
TBC	Tennis Masters Series 2003	Microids	
TBC	Xenosaga	SCEE	
MAY			
9 May	Run Like Hell	Empire	
16 May	Enter the Matrix	Infogrames	
16 May	World Championship Snooker	Codemasters	
23 May	Silent Hill 3	Konami	
30 May	Inquisition	Wanadoo	
TBC	Dancing Stage Mega Mix	Konami	Wanted!
TBC	Dead To Rights	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Ghost Vibration	Fresh Games	
TBC	Gladius	LucasArts	
TBC	Return To Castle Wolfenstein	Activision	
TBC	RTX Red Rock	Activision	
TBC	The Great Escape	SCi	
JUNE			
6 June	Shaun Murray's Pro Wakeboarding	Activision	
TBC	Batman: Dark Tomorrow	Kemco	
TBC	Dark Chronicle	SCEE	
TBC	Dungeons & Dragons: Heroes	Infogrames	
TBC	Evil Dead: A Fistful Of Boomstick	THQ	
TBC	The Hulk	Vivendi	
TBC	Indiana Jones & the Emperor's Tomb	LucasArts	
TBC	Socom: US Navy Seals	SCEE	
TBC	True Crime: Streets Of L.A.	Activision	
TBC	Yu-Gi-Oh	Konami	
JULY			
TBC	Alter Echo	THQ	
TBC	Dragon's Lair 3D	THQ	
TBC	Everybody's Golf 3	SCEE	
TBC	Pacman Fever	SCEE	
AUGUST			
TBC	Falcone: Into the Maelstrom	Virgin	
TBC	Medal Of Honour: Fighter Command	Electronic Arts	
SEPTEMBER			
TBC	ATV Off Road Fury 2	SCEE	
TBC	Conflict: Desert Storm II	SCi	
TBC	Driver 3	Infogrames	
OCTOBER			
TBC	Pro Evolution Soccer 3	Konami	
NOVEMBER			
TBC	Ghost Master	Empire	
TBC	Red Dead Revolver	Capcom	



GAMECUBE

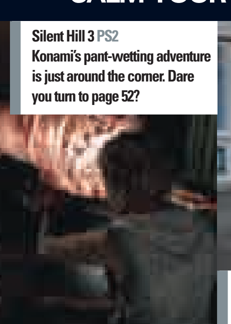
Month	Title	Publisher	
APRIL			
25 April	Blood Rayne	Vivendi	
25 April	Superman: Shadow of the Apokolips	Infogrames	
TBC	Dr Muto	Midway	
TBC	Haven: Call Of The King	Midway	
MAY			
2 May	F1 Career Challenge	Electronic Arts	
2 May	NBA Street 2	Electronic Arts	
2 May	Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker	Nintendo	Wanted!
2 May	WWE: Crush Hour	THQ	
9 May	Hunter: The Reckoning	Infogrames	
9 May	Ikaruga	Infogrames	Wanted!
16 May	Burnout 2: Point Of Impact	Acclaim	
16 May	Enter the Matrix	Infogrames	
16 May	Lost Kingdoms II	Activision	
23 May	Mercedes Benz World Racing	TDK	
23 May	Skies of Arcadia: Legends	Infogrames	
30 May	Red Faction II	THQ	
TBC	Conflict: Desert Storm	SCi	
TBC	Resident Evil 2	Capcom	
TBC	Resident Evil 3	Capcom	
JUNE			
5 June	Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	Ubi Soft	
13 June	The Hulk	Vivendi	
TBC	Futurama	SCi	
TBC	Wario World	Nintendo	
SEPTEMBER			
TBC	Powerpuff Girls 2	Bam!	
TBC	Soul Calibur II	Nintendo	Wanted!
TBC	Starsky & Hutch	Empire	
OCTOBER			
3 October	Bulletproof Monk	Empire	
TBC	Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	Eidos	



XBOX

Month	Title	Publisher
APRIL		
25 April	Robocop	Virgin
TBC	Blood Rayne	Vivendi
TBC	Malice: Kat's Tale	Vivendi
TBC	Midnight Club II	Rockstar
TBC	NBA 2K3	Infogrames
TBC	NFL 2K3	Infogrames
MAY		
2 May	Star Wars Galaxies	LucasArts
2 May	NBA Street 2	Electronic Arts
2 May	Project Zero	Microsoft
9 May	Moto GP 2	THQ

CALM YOUR FEVERISH ANTICIPATION WITH OUR COMPREHENSIVE LIST OF FORTHCOMING RELEASES



Silent Hill 3 PS2
Konami's pant-wetting adventure is just around the corner. Dare you turn to page 52?



Starsky & Hutch PS2, Xbox, GC, GBA
Time to pull on those flares and grow that afro – the preview is on page 64

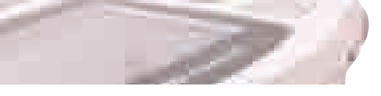
Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness PS2, PC
Will Lara pull it out the bag? We find out on page 70

Pokémon Ruby/Sapphire GBA
Catch 'em all in the review on page 116

9 May	Tao Feng: Fist Of The Lotus	Microsoft	
16 May	Enter The Matrix	Infogrames	
16 May	World Championship Snooker	Codemasters	
30 May	Red Faction 2	TDK	
TBC	Dragon's Lair 3D	THQ	
TBC	Dungeons & Dragons: Heroes	Infogrames	
TBC	Return To Castle Wolfenstein	Activision	
TBC	Knights of the Old Republic	LucasArts	Wanted!
JUNE			
6 June	Wakeboarding Unleashed	Activision	
20 June	Brute Force	Microsoft	
27 June	Midtown Madness 3	Microsoft	
TBC	Futurama	SCi	
TBC	The Hulk	Vivendi	
TBC	Mace Griffin: Bounty Hunter	Vivendi	
TBC	Starsky & Hutch	Empire	
TBC	The Great Escape	SCi	
JULY			
TBC	Outlaw Volleyball	TDK	
SEPTEMBER			
TBC	Black And White	Lionhead	
TBC	Conflict: Desert Storm II	SCi	
TBC	Dino Crisis 3	Capcom	
TBC	Rainbow Six: Raven Shield	Ubi Soft	
TBC	Soul Calibur II	Electronic Arts	
TBC	XIII	Ubi Soft	
OCTOBER			
TBC	Bulletproof Monk	Empire	
TBC	Ghost Master	Empire	
TBC	Wallace & Gromit	BAM!	
NOVEMBER			
TBC	Doom III	Activision	
TBC	Driver 3	Infogrames	
TBC	Ninja Gaiden	Microsoft	
TBC	Starcraft Ghost	Vivendi	
TBC	True Fantasy Live Online	Microsoft	Wanted!
DECEMBER			
TBC	BC	Microsoft	
TBC	Thief	Eidos	

PC

Month	Title	Publisher
APRIL		
25 April	Blitzkrieg	CDV
TBC	The Sims Online	Electronic Arts
TBC	Gothic 2	Jo Wood
MAY		
2 May	Dragon's Lair 3D	THQ
2 May	World War 2: Frontline Command	Koch
9 May	Blood Rayne	Vivendi
9 May	Eve Online: The Second Genesis	TDK
16 May	Enter The Matrix	Infogrames
16 May	Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	Rockstar
16 May	The Sims: Superstar	Electronic Arts
16 May	World Championship Snooker	Codemasters
23 May	Ghost Master	Empire
30 May	Red Faction 2	TDK
30 May	Star Trek: Elite Force II	Codemasters
TBC	Neverwinter Nights: Shadows Of Undrentide	Infogrames
JUNE		
13 June	The Hulk	Vivendi
13 June	World of Warcraft	Vivendi
TBC	Colin McRae Rally 3	Codemasters
TBC	Commandos 3	Eidos
TBC	Deus Ex: Invisible War	Eidos
TBC	Heaven And Hell	CDV
TBC	Republic: The Revolution	Eidos
TBC	Starsky & Hutch	Empire
TBC	The Great Escape	SCi
TBC	Tomb Raider: Angel Of Darkness	Eidos
JULY		
TBC	Breed	CDV
SEPTEMBER		
TBC	Conflict: Desert Storm II	SCi



GBA

Month	Title	Publisher	
MAY			
9 May	GT Advance 3: Concept Racing	THQ	
25 May	Disney Princesses	THQ	
TBC	Altered Beast: Guardian Of The Realms	THQ	
TBC	Crazy Taxi: Catch A Ride	THQ	Wanted!
TBC	Need For Speed: Porsche Unleashed	Zoo	
TBC	The Revenge Of Shinobi	THQ	
TBC	Road Rash: Jailbreak	Zoo	
TBC	Space Channel 5: Ulala's Cosmic Attack	THQ	
TBC	Wario Ware Inc	Nintendo	
JUNE			
6 June	Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	Ubi Soft	
6 June	Wakeboarding Unleashed	Activision	
13 June	Iridion 3D 2	Vivendi	
13 June	The Hulk	Vivendi	
27 June	Magical Quest Starring Mickey & Minnie Mouse	Nintendo	
27 June	Megaman Battle Network	Capcom	
TBC	Freakstyle	Midway	
TBC	Rock N' Roll Racing	Vivendi	
TBC	Sim City 2000	Electronic Arts	
SEPTEMBER			
9 September	Starsky & Hutch	Empire	
TBA	Kirby: Nightmare In Dream Land	Nintendo	
TBA	A Sound Of Thunder	BAM!	
TBA	Premier Manager	Zoo	

PLEASE NOTE: While every effort has been made to ensure these dates are correct at the time of going to press, they are liable to change at short notice. It's not our fault, really it isn't. We've got notes from our mums to excuse us anyway.

games™ ON THE HORIZON

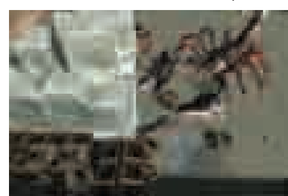
BROKEN SWORD 3: THE SLEEPING DRAGON

Format: PC, PS2, Xbox
Publisher: THQ
The *Broken Sword* franchise has always offered a mixture of humour and mystery – not to mention some rock hard puzzles – to loyal gamers over the years. Now it's jumping to the next-gen consoles and promises to be every bit as good as its predecessors. Let's just hope we don't have to meet that goat again though…



FALLOUT: BROTHERHOOD OF STEEL

Format: PS2, Xbox
Publisher: Interplay
Extremely popular on the PC, it's now the turn of the PS2 and Xbox to get a taste of Interplay's promising RPG franchise. In preventing the human race from turning into a mob of hideous mutants, lucky console owners are also offered a lot more action over their PC counterparts.



PIKMIN 2

Format: GameCube
Publisher: Nintendo
Miyamoto-san is back again with everyone's favourite spaceman-cum-gardener, no doubt stranded on yet another hostile planet – surely his ship hasn't crashed again? While not much is known about Nintendo's latest title, we know that it will involve an intriguing two-player mode. Two hundred Pikmin on the screen at once? The mind boggles...



'THINK TANK

THE PEOPLE IN THE GAMES INDUSTRY TELL IT LIKE IT IS…

OH, THE PRICE WE PAY TO MAKE A REALLY GREAT VIDEOGAME…



What do you think a game costs to make? Double that figure and you're still probably nowhere near. The truth is that creating a successful videogame generally requires a massive initial investment – and it's not always spent in the areas you might assume.

You'd guess that to produce a quality game requires you to pay the salaries and equipment costs for a team of ten or so coders for a few years – true. Consider, though, the hidden costs. Any idea of the final bill to localise a game into five different languages, or to license a couple of music tracks? How about the money needed to support a testing team for three months, to pay for a scriptwriter or to effectively PR and market a title?

And all that's before you even consider the cash needed to physically get your game distributed to the shops – and then onto the shelves. Sales teams, manual writers, packaging, adverts… everything comes with a price tag, and the more factors, the higher the risk to the increasingly nervous software publisher. The subsequent (and pretty understandable) result is a tendency towards more safe bets: games with '2' in their titles, or with big film licences attached.

Naturally, as gamers, you won't be losing any sleep over publishers' costs – only what you have to pay to play the best new releases. But don't think there isn't a link between how you spend your cash and the nature of games fighting for shelf space. The ever-spiralling costs inherent in game creation mean that publishers need to be confident that they're going to sell. Which is where your buying decisions come in. Invest only in the best and you'll reap the rewards. Simple as that. Power – in the case of this industry – really is with the games-buying people.

Cat Channon is an ex-games journalist, now PR Manager at Take Two Interactive and all-round top lass.

FROM THE FRONT

Buffy is just one of the great titles you can now pick up for a paltry £19.99.

Halo – the best-selling Xbox game by far, but not available in the Classic range.

AGGRESSIVE MARKETING BY MICROSOFT AS IT LAUNCHES A NEW XBOX BUDGET RANGE

RELIVING THE CLASSICS

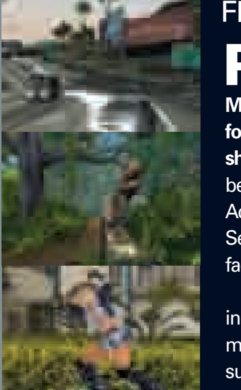
Microsoft's range of classic Xbox titles (already available in the US) has finally arrived in Europe. Launched on 11 April, the £19.99 range is bolstered by support from several high-profile software companies – Activision, Electronic Arts, Acclaim and THQ are just a few of the firms with products available. "We're very excited about the launch of our new Classics range," said Michael Cassius, senior director of Xbox platform and marketing. "These best selling titles are now available at a price that's hard to refuse – it's a great opportunity for even more Xbox gamers to add to their collections."

With Sony's Platinum range already proving a huge success on the PlayStation2, it's no shock to find that Microsoft is taking a similar approach by ensuring that the new Classics range has enough diversity to appeal to as many gamers as possible. Among the 14 titles available are the likes of *Dead Or Alive 3*, *Moto GP* and *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* – although if you're expecting to see *Halo*, you'll be disappointed. Just like Sony's range of cut price software, Classics titles must meet certain criteria to qualify – selected games must be best sellers and have been on sale for at least nine months. Technically, *Halo* should qualify, but as it's still in the Xbox top ten it would be foolish of Microsoft to discount it yet.

The Classics range is definitely a shrewd move by Microsoft (although we would have liked *Halo* to be included) and one that was almost certainly influenced by Nintendo's decision to launch its Players Choice range on April 4th.

LAW SUITS YOU, SIR

FIRST MR MIRRA SUES, NOW IT'S ACCLAIM'S INVESTORS



Poor old Acclaim – having already come under fire from BMX superstar Dave Mirra, it's now facing further problems in the form of a damaging lawsuit from its own shareholders. The suit, which is being filed on behalf of all investors who purchased stocks in Acclaim between 11 January and 19 September 2002, is to be based on five 'adverse facts' about Acclaim's financial performance.

The five alleged misrepresented facts include channel stuffing to increase sales, misrepresenting declining demand for games such as *Aggressive Inline* and *Turok Evolution* and developing titles containing 'mature themes' such as *BMX XXX* which impeded its ability to gain access to major retail channels. Not surprisingly, the disgruntled shareholders are a bit peeved that Acclaim spent most of 2002 assuring them that all was well and continued to issue "materially false and misleading" statements, claiming increased financial performance and incomes while omitting key facts that may have hinted at a totally different story.

With this and the Dave Mirra/*BMX XXX* case still unresolved, we feel that the coming year could prove to be a testing one for the top bods at Acclaim…

PIE IN THE SKY

THE GAMES MARKET KEEPS GROWING, AND GROWING…

Despite numerous developers falling by the wayside recently, the world videogame market is actually growing faster than ever. A new report by analysts at *Screen Digest* on behalf of ELSPA (the Entertainment and Leisure Software Publishers Association) shows that the current 128-bit consoles have sold 30 per cent more than the previous generation of gaming technology. According to the report, the leisure software market in the UK is currently double the size of the British video rental market and nearly one and a half times larger than cinema box office spending.

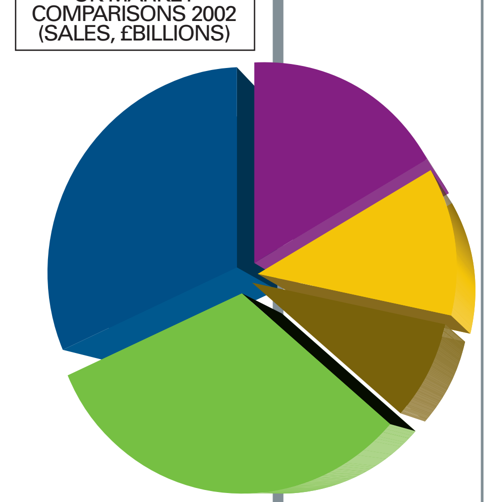
It's not just software that's selling extremely well – hardware sales for 2002 were also very impressive, improving on the previous year by 44 per cent and accounting for over 3.3 million units. The most successful game was undoubtedly Rockstar North's *GTA: Vice City*, selling over one million units in just eight weeks.

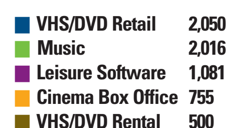
Roger Bennett, director general of ELSPA, says the figures are very encouraging. "The *Screen Digest* report confirms what most people in the industry have known: games represent one of the world's fastest-growing and most successful industries," he said. "The continued growth puts us in a stronger position than ever before. Twenty years ago we were a niche market; a cottage industry. In such a short time we've become one of the dominant forces in leisure pursuits.

"However, there's no doubt that the coming year will be tremendously important for the industry. It's true that some sectors of the business have struggled over the past year, [but] we have no reason to doubt that the coming year is going to be just as successful as 2002 – and with the first quarter of the year already getting off to a promising start, things can only get better."

And so say all of us…

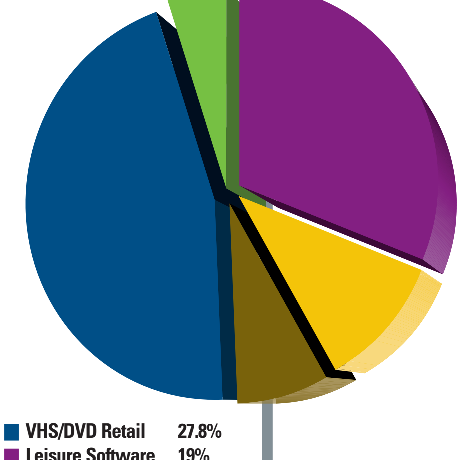
UK MARKET COMPARISONS 2002 (SALES, £BILLIONS)

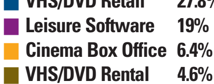




VHS/DVD Retail	2,050
Music	2,016
Leisure Software	1,081
Cinema Box Office	755
VHS/DVD Rental	500

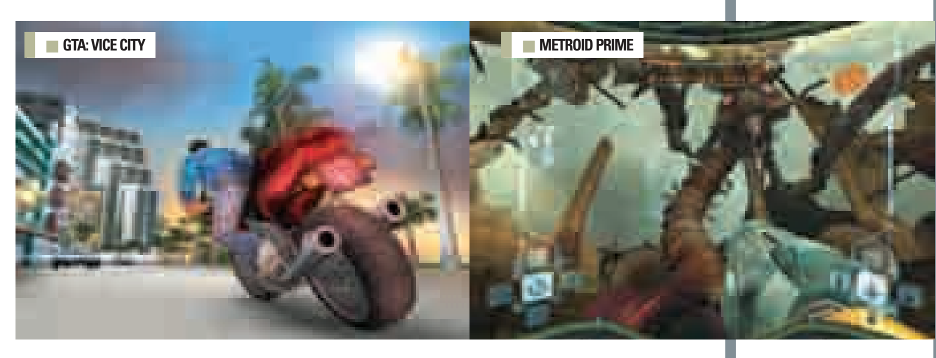
COMPARATIVE AVERAGE YEARLY GROWTH IN MARKET SPENDING







VHS/DVD Retail	27.8%
Leisure Software	19%
Cinema Box Office	6.4%
VHS/DVD Rental	4.6%
Music	3%



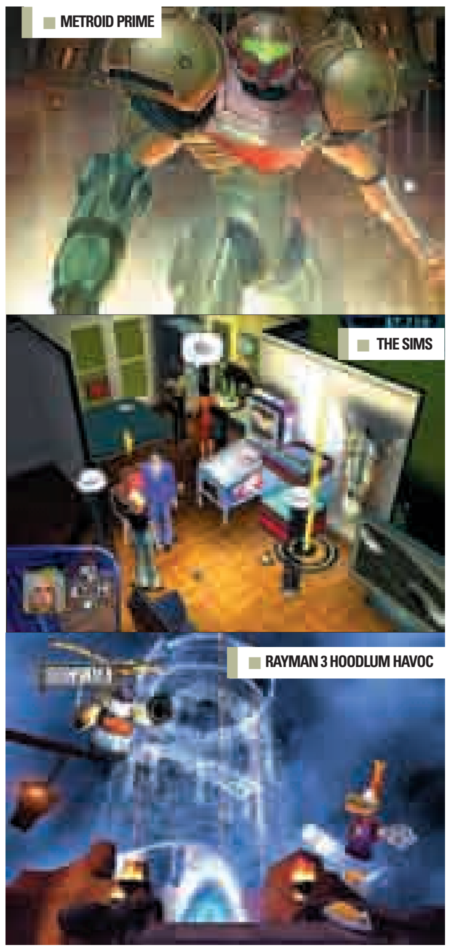
GTA: VICE CITY

METROID PRIME

UK MULTIFORMAT TOP TEN

	Title	Publisher	Format
1	Metroid Prime	Nintendo	GC
2	The Sims	EA Games	PS2, Xbox, GC
3	Rayman 3 Hoodlum Havoc	Ubi Soft	PS2, Xbox, GC, PC, GBA
4	The Getaway	Take 2	PS2
5	Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	SCEE	PS2
6	Lord Of The Rings: The Two Towers	EA Games	PS2, Xbox, GC, GBA,
7	Tenchu: Wrath Of Heaven	Activision	PS2
8	FIFA 2003	EA Sports	PS2, Xbox, GC, PC, PSone, GBA
9	Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance	Midway	PS2, Xbox, GC, GBA
10	Command And Conquer: Generals	EA Games	PC

Could it have been the huge amount of discounting? The GameCube/*Metroid Prime* bundle pack? Or maybe that the game is actually damn good? Whatever the reason, *Metroid Prime* has soared straight to the top of the charts, leaving EA's *The Sims* chewing on its dust.



METROID PRIME

THE SIMS

RAYMAN 3 HOODLUM HAVOC

UK Full Price Sales Charts (All Formats) (w/e Sat 22 March, 2003)

THE PROFESSION



ALREADY WATCHED BY THOUSANDS AND WITH SIX-FIGURE PRIZES, PROFESSIONAL GAMING IS COMING OF AGE FAR FASTER THAN ANYONE MIGHT HAVE IMAGINED. GAMES™ DISCOVERS HOW PRO GAMERS ARE SET TO STORM THE WORLD

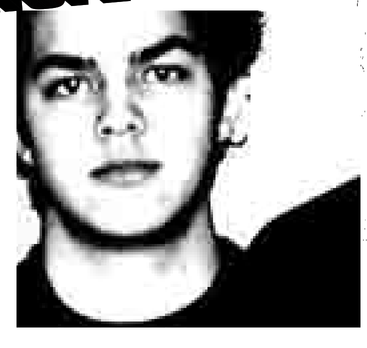
They must have raised a few eyebrows – this group of people hanging out in five-star hotels, accompanied by bodyguards and chauffered to and fro in a showroom's worth of black cars. Their behaviour would probably turn heads in London, so it can't have gone unnoticed on the streets of Astana, capital of Kazakhstan. Locals must have wondered who these people were. Diplomats? Maybe a rock band? Rich businessmen perhaps?

Whatever they thought, it's unlikely they would have guessed that the people being ferried around like royalty were the cream of the world's videogame players; especially seeing that access to videogames is probably not one of Kazakhstan's strong points. But there they were, professional gamers from the world over, poised to thrash it out with each other for the modest prize money and the sheer buzz of it all at a Kazakhstan pro-gaming tournament. And while such excess has yet to happen elsewhere, the way things are going with pro gaming this may well become an increasingly common sight throughout the world.

In the space of just a few years, professional gameplaying has gone from just another Internet oddity to a multi-million pound global industry. Top players have become minor stars thanks to this embryonic sport. *Quake* supremos Thresh (aka Dennis Fong) and Fatal1ty (Johnathan Wendel) are familiar names in hard-core PC gaming circles and the number of spectators is rising fast. Although barely out of nappies, pro-gaming is now thinking big with increasing talk of TV deals, professional teams with managers, national leagues and new games made with pro-gaming in mind.

Since its evolution off the back of multiplayer *Doom* and *Quake* deathmatches, pro-gaming has spawned a bewildering array of leagues,

THE PROFESSIONALS





TEAM SCHRÖET KOMMANDO



NAME: Schröet Kommando (or SK to their friends)

LOCATION: Stockholm, Sweden

GAMES: *Half-Life, Counter Strike*

FORMED: 2001 (in present form, but lineage dates back to 1997).

MEMBERS: Andreas 'bds' Thorstensson, HeatoN, brunk, Potti, ahl and fisker.

ADVICE TO WOULD-BE PRO-GAMERS: "Don't play to become a pro-gamer – play because you love the game, and then become a pro. Dedication is the key to success."

ORIGIN OF TEAM NAME: "Basically, schröet is an uncommon synonym for shrapnel. When we started our clan no-one had a clue about a good name, but someone got a crazy idea and SK was born. A pretty bad translation would be Shrapnel Commando."

competitions and tournaments. One of the first leagues to emerge was the Cyberathlete Professional League (CPL) founded by a former investment banker, Angel Munoz.

"CPL really kicked off when it first occurred to me that computer games could be elevated to the level of a sport from going to and watching people playing at LAN [Local Area Network] parties," recounts Munoz. "I talked to people about the idea and found out that it wasn't as far-fetched an idea as I thought it was and the CPL came out of that."

Since its launch, the CPL has exploded in popularity and its twice-yearly contests (one in the summer, one in the winter) are now key dates in the pro-gaming calendar. An estimated 30,000 people watched the last CPL tournament, mainly via the web, and Munoz is hopeful that the next match will attract up to 50,000 spectators.

South Korea's World Cyber Games (WCG), the first international pro-gaming event, has mirrored this explosive growth. Starting with a concept event in 2000 that drew 166 players from 17 countries, the WCG soared in popularity with last year's event in Daejon attracting more than 450 players from 45 countries – whittled down from an estimated 180,000 people who took part in the national preliminaries. On top of this, the event attracted 50,000 in-person spectators and the total prize money available was $300,000. This year's WCG, set to take place in mid-October, is expected to be even bigger. And with corporate Goliaths like Coca-Cola and Intel getting involved in sponsoring both the events and the players the progress so far looks like the tip of the iceberg.

More than any other nation, South Korea has been willing to embrace the idea of professional gaming as a sport and it is officially recognised by the authorities as an e-sport. Given the success of gaming as a sport and an event in South Korea, the top players are already stars.

"In Korea some of the best *StarCraft* players are treated like celebrities," says Piers Jolley, the UK-based world number one *Age Of Mythology* player. The willingness of nations like South Korea to take professional gaming seriously is also a worry for pro-gamers in the countries that don't."The Asian players always scare me because it's so big over there they can just sit in PC cafés and practise with each other, which is a really good way to improve," says Jolley. "I think it will get even bigger in Korea and I hope that pro-gaming will take off here, although I'm not sure that it will as the UK isn't really a pro-gamer's paradise."

> "CONSUMERS STILL WANT THE STAR IMAGE AS THEY DON'T REALLY CONNECT WITH BRANDS. WHAT I THINK WE'RE STARTING TO SEE WITH ONLINE GAMES IS THAT THE PLAYERS HAVE THE CHANCE TO BECOME FAMOUS THROUGH PLAYING"

Yet while the likes of South Korea and Taiwan push ahead with their vision of pro-gaming as a sport, Europe and the US are still stuck at the stage where people aren't sure if it is a legitimate sport. Naturally, Munoz is a strong advocate of pro-gaming being viewed as a sport, although he admits it won't fit the traditional sporting mould perfectly.

"It is a sport but it is not like a normal sport as it is constantly evolving and there are different games to use," he says.

UK Sport, the agency that decides what is officially a sport in Britain, has yet to make a decision either way, but parts of the criteria an activity must meet to be declared a sport suggests that pro-gaming faces an uphill struggle – the degree to which pro-gaming involves physical skill and effort, for example, will no doubt be a potential stumbling block. However, while



AGE: 22 **LOCATION:** USA

GAMES: *Quake 3, Unreal Tournament 2003*

ANNUAL INCOME:
$40,000-$50,000

THOUGHTS ON PRO-GAMING TEAMS:
"Everyone wants to be on a team or do something team-orientated. But personally I love all the pressure on my shoulders."

CAREER HIGHLIGHT: "The last win I had for *Unreal Tournament 2003* was really great. It shows that I'm not just really good at one game, but really good at playing FPS games as a whole. Also, with MTV following my every move and having that honour I feel fortunate."

NEXT MOVE: Currently setting up his own gaming products business, Fatal1ty Inc.

PLAYER
JOHNATHAN WENDEL [FATAL1TY]

the sporting world furrows its collective brow over the concept of videogaming as a sport, pro-gaming's relentless march to greater popularity seems undeterred.

Traditionally, pro-gaming has been focused on the efforts of individual players largely thanks to its roots in *Doom* deathmatches. However, in the past 12 months an increasing number of professional teams complete with sponsors, managers and contracts have been popping up across the world. Andreas Thorstensson, manager of Swedish *Counter Strike* team Schröet Kommando, believes the rise of teams allows players to make a living out of pro-gaming. "Teams are forming for the same reasons they formed in any other sports – to be able to make a living doing the thing you love, in this case playing games," says Thorstensson.

"We are the first team with real contracts and are sponsored by Intel, QSC and Elsa. Full sponsorship means we get travel and hotel costs paid for at all the events we attend."

In the long-run, Angel Munoz sees the current vogue for teams as the initial step on the road to creating professional and closed gaming leagues along the lines of the FA Premiership and NFL.

"There is no question that pro-gaming is moving towards teams in closed leagues," he suggests. "That change is already taking place and there are teams forming with managers and sponsors."

The growth of pro-gaming teams is also inspiring game developers to include features designed to encourage the fledging sport.

Speedball Arena, The Bitmap Brothers' forthcoming update of their classic future sports game, is one such game that has put pro-gaming at the heart of its multiplayer mode.

"*Speedball Arena* will be a multiplayer online sport as well as a solo game," says Ed Bartlett, business development director at The Bitmap Brothers. "Games are starting to become like sports and *Speedball* is a perfect game for that. A football game would end up stopping every few minutes but thanks to it having a closed arena *Speedball* makes for a better team videogame."

Speedball Arena will also include several features to help pro-gaming including specialist team positions (defence, midfield and attack) to prevent the game descending into a chaotic 'chase the ball' scenario, and the ability for the game to provide TV-style viewpoints designed with spectators in mind.

"On the spectator side of gaming not much has been done," says Bartlett. "*Quake* and other FPSs are corridor-based and that makes for a very disjointed viewing experience. *Speedball Arena* will provide spectators with both the Sky Sports-type views as well as the view from an individual player's eyes – something that will make watching the game a feast for the eyes."



"SPEEDBALL ARENA WILL PROVIDE SPECTATORS WITH BOTH THE SKY SPORTS-TYPE VIEWS AS WELL AS THE VIEW FROM AN INDIVIDUAL PLAYER'S EYES – SOMETHING THAT WILL MAKE WATCHING THE GAME A FEAST FOR THE EYES"

The Bitmap Brothers are also in talks with broadcasters about televising *Speedball Arena* matches, although Bartlett remains tight-lipped when it comes to revealing more.

With such rapid progress it is not hard to imagine that at some point a pro-gaming star like Fatal1ty could become more famous than game developers, especially as development teams become ever more numerous and faceless. "When we launched CPL we actually said in the original mission statement that at one point gamers will become as important as those who develop the games," says Munoz. "Developers will always have a certain prestige amongst gamers, but when it comes to the media it is infinitely more interesting to talk to people who have a love of a sport than someone who wants to sell games." Despite being part of the original wave of superstar developers, The Bitmap Brothers also believe the days of developer fame are numbered. "Back in the old days there were people like Peter Molyneux and ourselves who were big names, but now things are much more faceless," says Bartlett. "However, consumers still want the star image as they don't really connect with brands, and what I think we're starting to see with online games is that the players have the chance to become famous through playing."

But will the former development superstars mind being eclipsed by the players? "I don't think it will bother most developers as no-one goes into this industry expecting fame, despite all the talk of games being bigger than film and music," says Bartlett. "And besides," he adds, laughing, "on the whole we're an ugly bunch and you wouldn't want us on TV."

PLAYER PIERS JOLLEY

AGE: 17 **LOCATION:** England

GAMES: *Age Of Mythology, Age Of Empires II: The Conquerors*

NOTABLE SUCCESSES: The world's number one *Age Of Mythology* player, winner of the *Age Of Empires II* Europe Cup.

ADVICE TO WOULD-BE PRO-GAMERS: A lot of practice. "But if they don't want to starve they had better have some skills."

CAREER HIGHLIGHT: "Being invited to Kazakhstan and staying in a five-star hotel. It was an amazing experience. Best time of my life."



PLAYER
JARED 'chaOticz' GUGNO

AGE: 21 **LOCATION:** USA

GAMES: *Quake 3: Arena, Unreal Tournament 2003*

TEAM: Member of *Quake 3* team Darkside

ADVICE TO WOULD-BE PRO GAMERS: "The biggest piece of advice I can give is that losing is not the end of the world. No matter how good you get you will eventually lose a game. The best you can do is learn from each loss to make sure you don't make the same mistake twice."

TRAINING REGIME: Plays tournament maps until he feels confident on that map before honing new strategies and techniques to help him make his approach unpredictable.

CAREER HIGHLIGHT: "Killing [*Quake* champion] Fatal1ty with only one second left in the match to secure the final spot on the World Cyber Games US team. Being able to represent my country at the World Cyber Games was definitely one of the best experiences of my life."



Oh, I do like to be beside the seaside… **Soleil Mega Drive [SEGA] 1994**



SILENT HILL 3

KONAMI'S MASTERPIECE HORROR SERIES JUST GOT SICKER AND SLICKER THAN EVER

Back in the days when *Resident Evil 2* on the PSone was considered to be undisputed king of the videogame horror genre, the original *Silent Hill* was released in its shadow. Those of us who decided to give Konami's challenger a chance and allowed ourselves to be drawn into its terrifying clutches soon discovered that it offered a truly interactive horror experience, and quickly put Capcom's light-hearted zombie-zapping antics into perspective. With *Silent Hill 2*, the power of the PlayStation2 was fully harnessed to bring the same ingeniously chilling concepts into the next generation graphical arena. The results were breathtaking, and brought the nightmare to life with shocking new clarity. So will the third instalment in the series be capable of making similar progress in quality without the leap to a new platform enjoyed by its predecessor?

Well, the signs so far are very positive. Once again, most of the enhancements are in the aesthetic department, such as graphical sharpness, lighting and painstaking attention to detail, yet these are undoubtedly the integral ingredients in generating the atmosphere that really sets the series apart. The ability of the game's various visual elements and heart-stopping sound effects to completely immerse you in the town's hellish events is possibly *Silent Hill*'s greatest strength, and certainly key to its appeal for those uninspired by the *Resident Evil* brand of 'horror'.

The trademark lighting engine spearheads the graphical revamp in terms of enriched realism, with shadows particularly impressive on the eye at first, but also contributing to an intensity that will scare the dickens out of you as play progresses. As fans of the series will know, there is much more than an atmospheric eeriness to worry about whilst exploring the sleepy borough of Silent Hill. The other side to the games' unique draw has to be the genuinely disturbing breed of demonic creatures that lurk within the impressively cast shadows. No surprise then that *SH3* offers a new batch of these grossly mutated abattoir accidents that will both shock and unsettle.

This time around, however, players won't be stepping into the shoes of a guy who at least looks like he can work out one end of a revolver from the other. Instead, in an attempt to perhaps make us feel even more vulnerable to the terrors that await, our heroine is a young teenage girl named Heather. As usual, the developer has replaced anything resembling a plot with an incomprehensible twisty-turny thing. Suffice to say that Heather awakes in her local shopping centre from a haunting nightmare only to find that everyone in town has disappeared. Clearly, reality is about to take a sour turn for the worst, and before long the poor girl is plunged into a living nightmare of inconceivably horrific proportions. Okay, this sounds a little familiar but it's guaranteed to drag us into its usual web of mystery and confusion, making sure our panic instincts are kept close to the surface.

Newcomers who are tempted to sample *Silent Hill*'s unique kind of terror should be warned that no game is more worthy of an 18 certificate for graphic horror than this one. Those still brave enough to enter this twisted world will be pleased to know they can be enjoying an enhanced slice of gruesome terror by the end of May – several weeks before its release in Japan and the US.

DETAILS

FORMAT: PS2
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Konami
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: 23 May
GENRE: Horror Adventure
PLAYERS: 1

A few aesthetic tweaks go a long way to create the most atmospheric visit yet to gaming's grisliest town.

PERFECT BALANCE

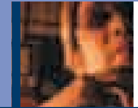
***Silent Hill 3* sees a welcome return of the option to select separate difficulty settings for action and riddles. As before, you'll be able to find the right balance of combat and puzzles depending on what you want out of the game. While few changes have been made to the gameplay, combat feels more integral here than in earlier instalments where the mere presence of monsters seemed more important than the fighting. The problematic camera angles can be tamed fairly quickly and should prevent any blind confrontations where your target is out of shot. We particularly like the inclusion of beef jerky in the game, which can be used to distract your bloodthirsty foes.**

"UTTERLY IMMERSING YOU IN THESE HELLISH EVENTS IS SILENT HILL'S GREATEST STRENGTH"



Please don't let me run out of ammo now…

Pink Rabbit swore he hadn't touched the jam doughnuts…



DEVELOPER PROFILE

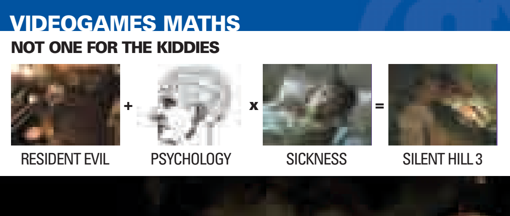
Akira Yamaoka was born in 1968 in Tokyo, Japan. His first in-game compositions were for *Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night* in 1997. He shot to fame with his haunting compositions for the *Silent Hill* series and is now renowned as one of the leading composers in the gaming world, boasting a sizeable fanbase.

HISTORY

- **SILENT HILL 3** 2003 [PlayStation2]
- **SILENT HILL 2** 2001 [PlayStation2]
- **SILENT HILL** 1999 [PSone]



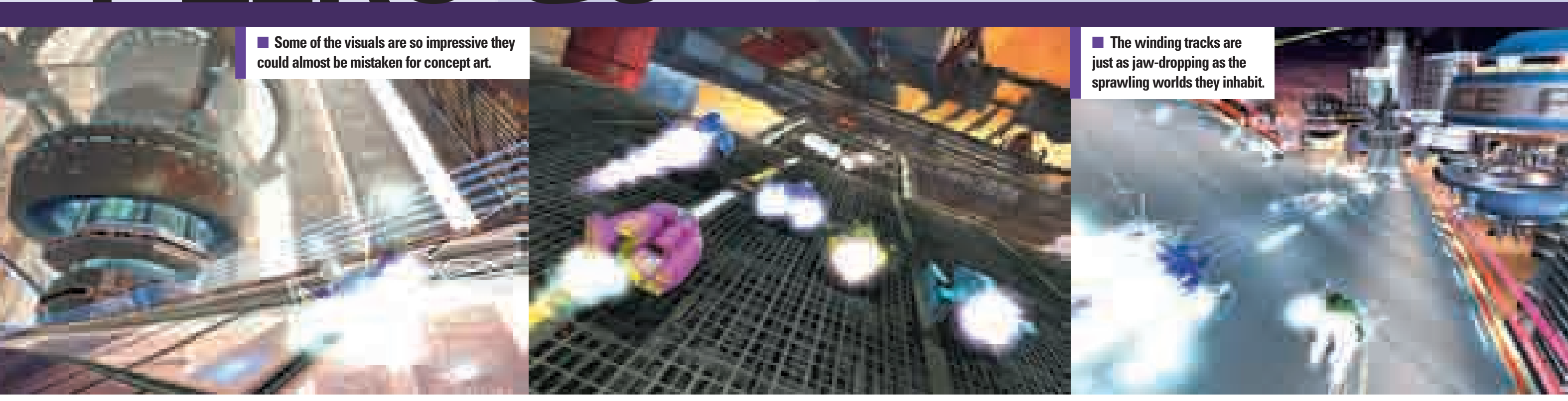
If I were you, I wouldn't touch the food. Or anything else for that matter.



"SILENT HILL 3 WILL BE THE SCARIEST OF THE SERIES – WE'VE LEARNT SOME LESSONS FROM PAST EXPERIENCE, AND WE HOPE TO MAKE THIS GAME VERY SCARY INDEED"

KAZUHIDE NAKAZAWA, SILENT HILL 3 DIRECTOR, KONAMI

F-ZERO GC



Some of the visuals are so impressive they could almost be mistaken for concept art.

The winding tracks are just as jaw-dropping as the sprawling worlds they inhabit.

SEGA PUTS THE HEDGEHOG ASIDE AND TURNS TO CARS FOR ITS HIGH-SPEED THRILLS…

What's all this then? Nintendo giving out another one of its precious franchises to an external company? It certainly didn't do the superb *Metroid Prime* any harm and early looks at various Japanese shows suggest that Amusement Vision is also on the right track with its GameCube update of the *F-Zero* series.

Taking a break from sphere-encased simians, AV's latest GameCube offering is shaping up to be a truly exhilarating experience. Like its predecessors, *F-Zero GC* is all about taking racing to the very extreme – the kind of racing that offers such intense, gut-churning speeds that you'll have to play the game with a sick bucket handy (much like in the N64 version only, well, faster).

Looking extremely slick with gorgeous texturing, blindingly fast tracks and plenty of graphical trickery – all running at a solid 60 frames per second – there's plenty to get those retinas burning. Even better, tracks are now set in the midst of bustling cities rather than barren landscapes and are jam-packed with spacecraft, hi-tech billboards and even the odd character from Nintendo's back catalogue. Think *Bladerunner* meets *Roadrunner* and you'll get a rough idea of the futuristic speed-fest this is shaping up to be (although with less coyotes and more hovercar thingies).

Gameplay-wise, the actual races are as frantic as ever, with you and 29 other racers hurtling along the impressive tracks at breakneck speeds. While the graphics may have been suitably upgraded for Nintendo's new console, what we've played so far suggests that little of the gameplay has been changed since its N64 outing (although obviously, this is no bad thing).

Additional game modes over its arcade peer have yet to be confirmed, although it is hoped that AV will add suitable extras to increase longevity – after all, this is the company that took a bunch of monkeys and created the best multiplayer game for the GameCube. Confirmed details for the home version of *F-Zero* include the addition of a first-person view (for those of you who like to turn the scenery into a sickening blur of nausea-inducing colour), five unique worlds to race through and even a currently unspecified two-player co-operative mode, although details as to how this will work are being kept under wraps.

Of course, with both Nintendo and SEGA at the wheel (albeit a futuristic one), you can be sure that the results should be pretty impressive.

"WHILE IT IS REMAINING TRUE TO THE FORMAT, AMUSEMENT VISION IS GIVING THE GAME A TYPICAL SEGA SHEEN"

DETAILS
FORMAT: GameCube
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Nintendo
DEVELOPER: Amusement Vision
RELEASE: TBA (Japan: May '03, US: 25 June)
GENRE: Racing
PLAYERS: 1

Nintendo's seminal futuristic racer gets the makeover treatment by SEGA favourite, Amusement Vision (monkeys and balls not included).



The aptly named Lightning track features a world ravaged by storms.


eMag

DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR



VIDEOGAMES MATHS

NOT JUST A PRETTY FACE...

DEUS EX + MAKEOVER x DEPTH = DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR

■ Interactions with intelligent NPCs will affect your relationships with them for the rest of the game, so it's best not to tick too many people off early on.

"EVERYTHING WE HAVE IN THE GAME, WE TRY AND USE FOR SOME KIND OF GAMEPLAY"

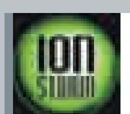
BILL MONEY, PRODUCER, ION STORM

■ The action takes place in real world locations of the not too distant future, where every bar worth its salt has a holographic jukebox to keep punters entertained.

■ Razor-sharp enemy AI will test your stealth abilities to the limit, but sticking to the shadows is a great way to avoid any unwanted attention.

DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR

PC/MULTIFORMAT



COMPANY PROFILE

■ **Originally founded in 1998, Ion Storm now operates from a single studio in Austin, Texas. With the renowned talent of Warren Spector as studio director and widely anticipated titles *Deus Ex: Invisible War* and *Thief III* currently in the pipeline, these are exciting times for the once troubled development house.**

HISTORY

- **THIEF III** TBA 2003 [PC]
- **ANACHRONOX** 2001 [PC]
- **DEUS EX** 2000 [PC, PS2]

ION STORM'S FREEFORM SCI-FI MASTERPIECE NOW LOOKS AS GOOD AS IT FEELS

When it was first released on the PC in 2000, Eidos' genre-bending classic *Deus Ex* took the gaming world by storm, picking up more than 35 Game of the Year awards and receiving critical acclaim across the board. With groundbreaking non-linearity and incredible depth of gameplay, the game was only hampered by some uninspiring visuals. In response to the pleas of gamers everywhere though, Ion Storm has made sure that the forthcoming sequel has been given plenty of beauty as well as brains.

Deus Ex: Invisible War sees the return of all the concepts that made the original such a masterpiece, only this time a complete graphical overhaul gives the game an appearance that does justice to the top notch gameplay. In fact, *Doom III* is the only other title out this year that showcases the revolutionary lighting technology at the heart of *DE:IW*'s stunning good looks. Whilst character models initially consist of an impressive 3,000 polygons, shadows cast by the dynamic lighting engine appear to increase this count dramatically and display textures with unparalleled realism.

The sheer richness of the in-game environments never fails to impress, yet in typical *Deus Ex* style nothing is ever just for show and you'll be able to interact with almost every object you come across. The clever physics engine creates an even greater level of realism, where shooting holes in a barrel will leak its contents in the right directions, and sophisticated 'rag doll' modelling ensures the demise of your adversaries is disturbingly true to life.

If the death animations prove too shocking, Ion Storm is striving to enable players to progress through the entire game without ever having to pull a trigger. Of course, choosing whether to rely on stealth or to indiscriminately use the weaponry at your disposal is only a glimpse of the freedom *DE:IW* grants players. One of the greatest strengths of the first game was the number of paths by which it was possible to complete each objective. *DE:IW* has taken this concept to new heights and provided interactive environments filled with possibilities for players to exploit however they see fit.

Your actions also shape your destiny, and decisions regarding your allegiances to the four main factions within the game will govern how proceedings unfold, giving the multi-branched storyline more open-ended potential than ever before. Missions will take place in the same locations regardless of who you're working for, but events will vary greatly in terms of your interactions with characters, opportunities available, and even the doors you'll be able to unlock. Although Ion Storm is remaining tight-lipped about the story, on the merit of the first game's engrossing plot we should be in for another entertaining ride laced with intelligent twists.

Expected to clock in at around 20 hours, *DE:IW* is shorter than its predecessor but anything it lacks in length is made up for in depth. With so much freedom the game should play out completely differently depending on the actions of each player, providing endless replay value. With its dazzling facelift and pioneering enhancements to every area of gameplay, *DE:IW* might just be one of the best games we've ever seen.

DETAILS

FORMAT: PC, Xbox, PS2
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Eidos Interactive
DEVELOPER: Ion Storm
RELEASE: Q3 '03
GENRE: FPS/RPG
PLAYERS: TBA

■ You want freedom? Then that's what you'll get. There are spadefuls of it in this awesome title.

CREATE YOUR OWN

Much of the depth here comes from the RPG elements, and customising your special abilities with various Bio-modifications ensures you're best suited to your preferred style of play. Two types of augmentation are available for each body part, but a third range can be bought on the black market. In addition, each augmentation can be upgraded by up to three levels, allowing players to focus development on a certain ability they plan to use extensively.

"WITH SO MUCH FREEDOM, THE GAME SHOULD PLAY OUT COMPLETELY DIFFERENTLY DEPENDING ON EACH PLAYER"



■ It's not just humanoid enemies you'll need to look out for. There are plenty of strange beasts after a piece of you too.

TRON 2.0



The bizarre cyber-futuristic atmosphere of the film has been accurately captured here, although it looks much better 20 years on.

Impressive new locations like Internet City expand the *TRON* universe far beyond the limited environments depicted in the original film.

THE TRON UNIVERSE RETURNS WITH A FRESH COAT OF NEON

After spending much of its time producing a range of lower-priced titles aimed at the younger end of the PC gaming market, Disney Interactive finally resolved to broaden its horizons with the ambitious *TRON 2.0* project. Under the guise of its new Buena Vista Games label, Disney enlisted the development expertise of Monolith in a bid to ensure a calibre of gameplay that would establish *TRON 2.0* as a serious contender with the more discerning adult gamer.

The 1982 film's cult following will no doubt guarantee the game an instant fanbase, but it's the stunningly individual aesthetics and the unique twist on the standard FPS concept that really justify the resurrection of the *TRON* franchise. All the gameplay takes place in the alternative dimension that apparently exists within our everyday computer systems, where programs walk the corridors of cyberspace as personifications of their creators. Twenty years after the events of the movie, we follow the adventures of Jet Bradley – son of Alan from the original story – as he is forced to journey through this digital realm unravelling the mystery behind his father's disappearance, whilst learning of a sinister plot to wreak havoc on the world's computer networks using a 'digitised' group of elite hackers.

The cutting-edge 3D graphics and lighting technology bring the distinctive luminescent gaming environment to life, whilst retaining the retro feel of the original *TRON* universe. Following consultations with Syd Mead – the concept designer for the *TRON*, *Bladerunner* and *Aliens* movies – Monolith were given plenty of creative freedom to expand on the framework set by the film, bringing the visuals right up to date and ensuring that the gameplay would not be confined by any strict limitations.

For instance, Jet isn't expected to rely on the basic frisbee-style discs featured in the movie to defend himself against swarms of digital adversaries. The disc is just one of four primitive weapon types, each capable of morphing into the whole arsenal of semi-automatic, explosive and sniper options you'd expect in any decent FPS. Of course, in the *TRON* universe, rather than causing bloodshed, weaponry is designed for the purpose of 'deleting' non-human programs, but the effects appear to be much the same.

The traditional disc does, however, form a unique aspect of combat gameplay in *TRON 2.0*. Unlike most standard FPS weapons the trajectory of the disc can be controlled whilst in flight, and when the disc is in the player's hand it can be used to block enemy barrages. Whilst adding a further element of skill to the main game, multiplayer disc battles also make for an entertaining spectacle and can take place in a variety of interactive arenas.

But perhaps the most anticipated sub-game within *TRON 2.0* will be the 3D Light Cycle battles. In addition to races featured in the main story, Circuit mode offers players a whole extra game in itself. Similar to the classic game of *Snakes*, riders hurtle around right-angled grids leaving a solid trail behind them in an attempt to box their opponents into a collision. Sadly, the sheer pace of these battles means the promised multiplayer Light Cycle mode is currently in doubt due to the split-second accuracy in timing this demands.

With the calibre of its sub-games, *TRON 2.0* is shaping up to be a great package. But while the unique look and feel of the *TRON* universe certainly sets the game apart, concerns remain that some may find such a niche concept to be lacking many of the popular real-world elements offered by more mainstream shooters.

DETAILS

FORMAT: PC
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Buena Vista Games
DEVELOPER: Monolith
RELEASE: Summer 2003
GENRE: First Person Action
PLAYERS: 1-32

Cyber metaphors and fast-paced action as Disney tries to enter the serious gaming market.

PLUG YOURSELF IN

If you're going to survive in cyberspace you'll have to get to grips with existing as a computer program. Firstly, Jet won't be able to pick up useful objects, but must instead download capabilities to enhance his programmed skills. This isn't always straightforward, as files can be corrupt and infect other abilities in Jet's repertoire. A wide selection of these modifications, or 'subroutines', is available – from virus protection software to weapon morphing abilities – but only a certain amount of memory is available to hold your active subroutines at any one time. You can therefore tailor Jet's capabilities to your preferred style of play or even adjust the set-up to tackle specific situations.

"WITH THE CALIBRE OF ITS SUB-GAMES, TRON 2.0 LOOKS LIKE A GREAT PACKAGE"

COMPANY PROFILE

MONOLITH

Monolith was founded in October 1994 by a small group of developers in Kirkland, Washington. The team received massive acclaim for the hugely successful *No One Lives Forever* series, and is currently working with movie giants Disney and Warner Bros on *TRON 2.0* and *The Matrix Online* respectively.

HISTORY

- **NO ONE LIVES FOREVER 2** 2002 [PC]
- **ALIENS VS. PREDATOR 2** 2001 [PC]
- **NO ONE LIVES FOREVER** 2000 [PC, PS2]



Fans of the *TRON* movie will be itching to get their hands on the Light Cycles, including a brand new model designed exclusively by Syd Mead.

Whilst violence is far enough removed from the real world to keep the censors at bay, FPS fans should still get a rush from eliminating those enemy programs.

"TRON 2.0 FOLLOWS THE VISION AND TRUE SPIRIT OF THE FILM – MONOLITH HAS DONE A GREAT JOB"

STEVEN LISBERGER, WRITER & DIRECTOR OF THE TRON MOVIE

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

VIRTUAL VIOLENCE

TRON + DOOM - BLOOD = TRON 2.0

VIEWTIFUL JOE

HE'S NOT JUST ANY OLD JOE, YOU KNOW…

When Capcom announced late last year that it was developing five brand new games exclusively for the GameCube, we were impressed. Having enough confidence in Nintendo's console to produce not just one, but five unique titles was a bold move for a developer known for its multi-console outings. Of course, we now know that confidence has waned (with *Resident Evil 4* being the only title to remain GameCube-exclusive), but at the time it was the diversity of the games that set tongues wagging. Out of all of the titles on show though, it was *Viewtiful Joe* that caught our attention the most – if only because the trailer created more questions that answers. Who is Joe? Why all the 'bullet time' slow-mo? And what on Earth is a Viewtiful?

Well, now we know. Or at least, we know more than we did before. In a nutshell, *Viewtiful Joe* is exactly what it looks like – a side-scrolling beat-'em-up with platform elements and lovely cel-shaded graphics. Split the nutshell open though and you begin to realise that the game is so much more, with subtle nuances that give it far more character than the usual 'punch anything that moves' games.

For instance, Joe isn't just your average bloke in a tight-fitting lycra costume and silly helmet. Although you start out as plain old Joe (a typically punkish skateboarding-type, complete with backwards baseball cap and annoying media student goatee), you'll soon run into another hero who takes you under his wing and teaches you how to be Viewtiful Joe instead. Each time you meet this mysterious blue-caped hero, you'll gradually learn several all-important super moves; it's here that the distinct superhero flair that Joe displays comes to the fore. Each super move that you learn can be activated at the push of a button, lasting until your Viewtiful FX meter runs dry (at which point you turn back into regular Joe until it fills up again). Of course, you'll need to make sure you use the right move in the right circumstances – when faced with a gun-toting foe, for instance, you can use the Slow ability to reduce the speed of his bullets to a crawl and then smack them back at him to do damage.

Even without his special moves though, Joe's still a pretty nimble chap; he can leap up platforms and cross giant divides without too much trouble. He can even 'predict' attacks to a degree, thanks to the markers that flash up on screen just before an enemy strikes – by pushing either up or down on the analogue stick (depending on whether it's a high or low blow), you can dodge and counter attack. It's a simple system, but one that works incredibly well.

Like we said, though, it's the little things (mostly in the presentation) that help make *Viewtiful Joe* really stand out. Using a pseudo-3D camera style on top of the 2D action, the whole game manages to capture the parallax style that was so popular in the early Nineties when side-scrolling beat-'em-ups were all the rage. When you jump up high the camera stays fixed, giving a worm's eye view of the proceedings, and there are even spiral staircases that let the camera pan round in a 3D style, without ever taking the action out of the second dimension. Combine this with the easy-to-handle controls, hordes of enemies and some extremely over-the-top bosses, and you've got something pretty special. Considering what we've already played was only a taster, the main course can't come soon enough.

DETAILS

FORMAT: GameCube
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Capcom
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: Q4 '03 (Japan: May '03, US: August '03)
GENRE: Action/Platform
PLAYERS: 1

■ Can Capcom rejuvenate the side-scrolling beat-'em-up with clever moves and stylish graphics?

GOING TURBO

Seeing how the whole game features all the typical Japanese superhero stylings that you'd expect to find in any number of *Ultraman* movies, you probably won't be surprised to hear that collecting reels of film is one of the more important things to do in the game. Once Joe manages to acquire his 'viewtiful' powers, the Viewtiful FX meter appears at the top of the screen – this slowly empties whenever Joe uses any of his special moves and then fills up again as you defeat various enemies. Of course, you'll only start out with a small amount of charge in the meter and this is where the film reels come in. Collect 50 of them and you'll get an additional cell for your meter, allowing you to use your powers for longer. Believe us, you're going to need them later on in the game…

> "IF YOU THINK SIDE-SCROLLING BEAT-'EM-UPS ARE DEAD, THIS COULD CHANGE YOUR MIND…"



■ This is Joe's mentor, who'll pop up every so often to teach you a new ability (once you've managed to kick his arse, that is).



DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ Having already worked on a number of Capcom's most successful titles since joining the firm in 1994 (including directing *Resident Evil 2* and *Devil May Cry*), Hideki Kamiya seems to be more than capable of making *Viewtiful Joe* a success – his overt enthusiasm is apparent in the games for which he has been responsible.

HISTORY

- ■ **DEVIL MAY CRY** 2001 [PS2]
- ■ **RESIDENT EVIL 2** 1998 [PSone]
- ■ **RESIDENT EVIL** 1996 [PSone]

"A SUPERHERO MUST NOT ONLY BE BRAVE AND STRONG, BUT HE MUST FIGHT HIS FOE WITH A BEAUTIFUL STYLE"

HIDEKI KAMIYA, CAPCOM

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

UNDER THE SUIT OF THE BEAUTIFUL HERO

MEGAMAN + CEL SHADING x POWER RANGERS = VIEWTIFUL JOE

■ Killing multiple enemies in a chain or generally doing well will earn you Viewtifuls. Yes, they sound odd, but you'll need them, so don't laugh…

■ If you use the Slow ability when you're surrounded, you can use nearby enemies as projectiles to take out a whole crowd in one attack.

CHAOS LEGION


There's no let-up in the hack and slash action, so don't even think about pausing to catch your breath

SOME DAYS YOU JUST WANT TO KILL EVERYTHING…

DETAILS
FORMAT: PS2
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Capcom
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: Q3 (Japan: Out Now)
GENRE: Adventure
PLAYERS: 1

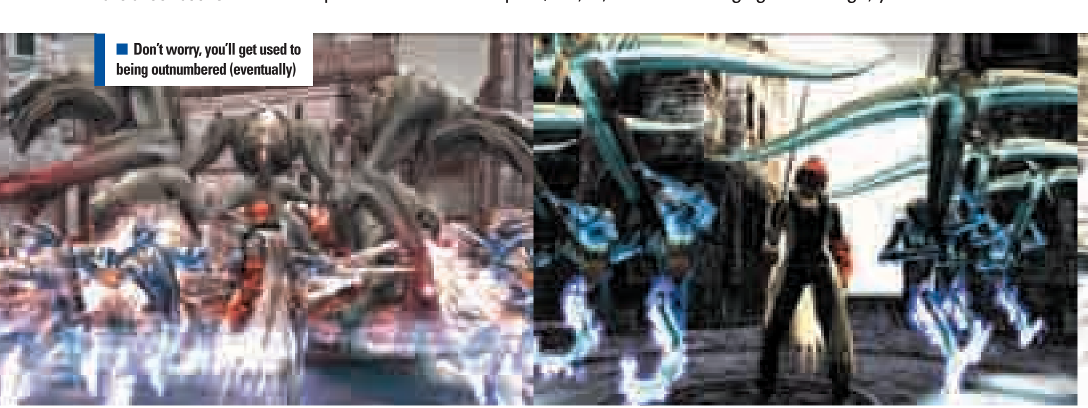
What do you get when you combine *Devil May Cry* and *Dynasty Warriors*? Take a look at this…

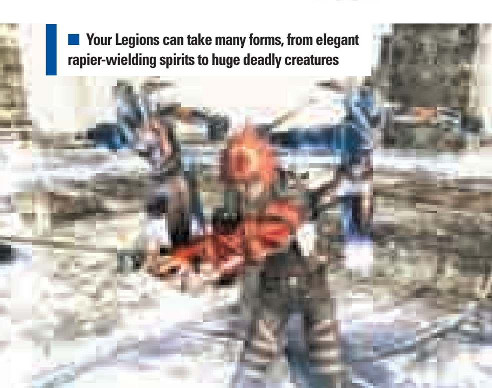
What would you expect from an 'intense gothic opera'? It's certainly an intriguing idea but having played Capcom's latest action-packed offering, we'd be tempted to say that this three-word description isn't that accurate. Intense? Check – taking on 30-odd enemies at a time is hardly a walk in the park. Gothic? Yep – *Devil May Cry* and its sequel have taught Capcom plenty about gothic architecture and enemy design. But it's the opera bit that loses us – with much more emphasis on action than plot (and, er, no fat women singing) *Chaos Legion* is more Hollywood no-brainer than high-brow entertainment. But as far as we're concerned, this is no bad thing.

The frenzied action kicks off as soon as you begin and you're quickly surrounded with things to hit, and they are just that – Things – hideous freaks (and considering the number of these huge oddities that appear at one time, it's a wonder that the game manages to sustain such smooth and impressive visuals throughout). If things get too rough, you'll have the option of summoning Legions – guardian spirits who'll defend you or help you fight. This is where a lot of *Chaos Legion*'s RPG-lite elements come into play, as earned experience is used for increasing the number of Legions summoned, improving their abilities or teaching them new moves. This experience can also be used to enhance the skills of main character Sieg.

> "THINK DEVIL MAY CRY TURNED UP TO 11 AND YOU'RE ALMOST THERE. FRANTIC IS NOT THE WORD…"

Parallels with Koei's long-running *Dynasty Warriors* series are inescapable as the two do have a lot in common; with countless enemies on-screen at once, the emphasis on action and the repetitive nature of the tasks at hand, the two titles could have been separated at birth. For what it's worth, *Chaos Legion* does tackle the genre in a more stylish fashion than the *Dynasty Warriors* games and will also no doubt serve as a great release for those who don't want to leap in at the deep end of Koei's *Three Kingdoms* story. In another similarity, we can't see *Chaos Legion* being the kind of game most people would just sit down and play through – the game looks to lend itself more to 'little and often' play and, as such, should work excellently. Response to the title in Japan seems favourable so we'll definitely be taking a more detailed look at the game nearer its Autumn release.


Don't worry, you'll get used to being outnumbered (eventually)


Your Legions can take many forms, from elegant rapier-wielding spirits to huge deadly creatures


eMag

STARSKY & HUTCH



■ Criminals being as they are, you'll sometimes find yourself on the receiving end of a right good battering in the middle of a chase.

■ In typical Seventies TV cop show style, there are plenty of times when your car will be flying through the air and smashing through boxes.

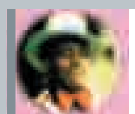
"FOLLOWING THE STYLE OF THE TV SHOW CLOSELY, STARSKY & HUTCH WON'T JUST JUST BE SHOOTING GAME"

EMPIRE PRESS RELEASE

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

BAD BOYS, BAD BOYS – WATCHA GONNA DO?

CHASE HQ + GTA3 + THE TV SHOW = STARSKY & HUTCH



ACTOR PROFILE

■ Having been an actor since the age of 14, Antonio Fargas has worked his way up to being one of the most well-known blaxploitation stars around. Although he has starred in over 50 film and TV roles, he will always be best known for playing streetwise 'gangsta' Huggy Bear in *Starsky & Hutch*.

HISTORY

■ **CAR WASH** 1976 [Movie]
■ **STARSKY & HUTCH** 1975 [TV]
■ **SHAFT** 1971 [Movie]

WHO NEEDS THE 21ST CENTURY WHEN THE SEVENTIES WERE SO DAMN COOL?

PS2 **So, we've seen everything that *Knight Rider* and *Dukes Of Hazzard* had to offer… does that mean all games based on retro TV shows have to be generic racers?** Not if Empire has anything to do with it, it doesn't. In taking all the high-octane car chase action from the TV show and mixing it with a variety of ideas that we've seen before, Starsky & Hutch's transition into the realm of videogames is much more than the bog-standard driving game it could have been.

The most obvious reference is to the classic Eighties arcade game *Chase HQ*; a fairly simple driving game where the aim was to chase after criminals in their stolen vehicles and ram their car until it burst into flames. *Starsky & Hutch* follows a similar theme of 'stop Mr Bad Guy escaping' for virtually all of its 18 episodic levels, but rather than having you follow a straight route from A to B, Empire has incorporated the more city-based experience of *Grand Theft Auto 3* to give more freedom. The result? A free-for-all chase-fest where smashing through windows, racing down narrow alleys and smashing through flimsy stacks of boxes is strongly encouraged.

This being a TV show though, the exciting stunts are for the benefit of your audience, so you'll have to do as many as you can to keep them happy; if too many people turn off, you'll fail the mission and have to start over. Okay, so it's just an elaborate way of putting a time limit on each stage but it helps give you an incentive to take more adventurous routes on your quest to stop the criminals in their tracks.

The most impressive concept that *Starsky & Hutch* has to offer is unfortunately reserved for PlayStation2 owners only – while Xbox, GameCube and PC players will have to be content with playing with their mates on just pads and steering wheels, people picking up the PS2 version will have the added bonus of being able to use a GunCon 2 as well. Although the multiplayer game (which we've outlined in a separate section just over there) remains the same in principle, the use of the GunCon 2 makes things much more interesting for the person playing as Hutch. It's a really good idea and one that, if implemented properly, will increase the longevity of the game. Unfortunately, we do wonder if it will work or not. At the time of going to press, we still hadn't received code in which the lightgun mode worked properly which, considering the game is due out quite soon, is rather worrying.

Despite all the obvious problems that need to be ironed out, there's some quality *Chase HQ*-style action buried underneath which stands out more than Huggy Bear in a crowd of nuns. It's all a question of time, but that's something that Minds Eye – with the proposed release date of June drawing ever closer – doesn't have much of at the moment. Fingers crossed, we'll be bringing you the final verdict in the next issue.

PARTNERS FOR LIFE

Ever imagined racing through the streets at high speed with your best mate, smashing through boxes and shooting at passers-by with your trusty revolver? Hold that thought, because Empire reckons that *Starsky & Hutch* will let you do just that. By plugging in a second controller, you can split control of the dynamic duo between the two of you; one plays as Starsky and gets to drive the car, while the other plays as Hutch and takes charge of leaning out of the window, taking pot shots at anything that gets in the way. Those perps are going down…

DETAILS

FORMAT: PS2/Xbox/GC/GBA/PC
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: Empire Interactive
DEVELOPER: Minds Eye Productions
RELEASE: June (PS2/PC), July (Xbox), Sept (GC/GBA)
GENRE: Driving
PLAYERS: 1-2

■ It's *Chase HQ* for the next-generation, with a *GTA*-style city map and the two 'baddest' cops that everyone wanted to be back in 1975.

"IF YOU'RE INTO FAST CARS, GUNFIRE AND SEVENTIES ACTION, THIS ONE'S RIGHT UP YOUR CARDBOARD BOX-FILLED ALLEY"



■ Notching up viewing figures is just as important as catching the crooks, so you'll have to perform all manner of stunts and skids to keep people watching.

■ Special events happen in particular places – hit the Star icons that appear to activate them and increase your viewing figures.

SOUL CALIBUR II



Kilik's back, only now he's carrying an even bigger stick than before.

Most of the secret characters come in the form of familiar faces.

THE LEGEND WILL NEVER DIE – IT JUST GETS MOVED ONTO EVERY FORMAT UNDER THE SUN…

DETAILS

FORMAT: PS2/Xbox/GameCube
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts (PS2/Xbox), Nintendo (GC)
DEVELOPER: Namco
RELEASE: September '03 (Japan: Out Now, US: August (TBC)
GENRE: Beat-'em-up
PLAYERS: 1-2

The third *Soul Blade* game is about more than swords.

A huge hit when it was originally released on the Dreamcast, *Soul Calibur*'s blend of *Virtua Fighter*'s strategy and *Tekken*'s lengthy combos ensured it sat comfortably between the two heavyweights of 3D fighters. Of course, it wasn't just gameplay where the title excelled – the game was wonderful to look at and, even now, manages to more than hold its own against the likes of *Dead Or Alive 3* and *Tekken 4*. With this in mind, it's no surprise to find that Namco isn't taking any chances with the sequel by ensuring that every version released has more than enough differences to warrant a purchase over its peers – a refreshing change from the normal quick port attitude that plagues many multiformat titles.

Despite the fact that *Soul Calibur II* looks remarkably similar to the original at first glance, there are quite a few subtle improvements. Take the redesign of the game's levels, for instance. Taking a similar approach to *Dead Or Alive 3*, there are now plenty of opportunities to pummel your opponents into the many objects that litter each playing area. Ring-outs are also harder to achieve, as many of the newer stages are much larger than those found in the original game.

What's more, most of the ridiculously fast combos from the previous game have now been restructured, meaning that it is much easier to disrupt certain strings of attacks and regain the initiative over your opponent. All these changes aside though, it's more a case of a little tuck here and a little nip there rather than a major revolution (although many will argue that when the original was so good, this isn't really an issue).

Despite the many similarities to the original, the arcade version of *Soul Calibur II* actually felt very similar to *Soul Blade*, particularly in terms of musical content and edginess. Fights in general had a much grittier feel than the beautifully choreographed bouts of *Soul Calibur*, so fans of the arcade game will be pleased to know that this style has translated well onto the home versions.

Naturally, the downside of beat-'em-ups is that they normally suffer in the longevity department if there isn't a second player available. Fortunately, Namco is adding more than enough unique modes to ensure that *Soul Calibur II* ends up being a very comprehensive fighter. In addition to the standard Arcade and Versus games, there are stock modes such as Time Attack, Survival, Practice and Team Battle. On top of all that though, there's also the Weapon Master mode – this is similar to the Edge Master mode from *Soul Blade*, but is enhanced by some new RPG elements. The crux of the gameplay will see you completing various tasks and then being supplied with around 200 weapons with which you can equip various characters in the game.

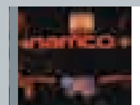
The other big news about Namco's forthcoming release is that each console version will benefit from having one system-specific combatant who you'll no doubt recognise from elsewhere. And they're not the only new characters you can expect to get to grips with – from evolutions of previous characters (such as Alexandra) to brand new fighters like Raphael, Necrid and Charade, there's more than enough variety to keep beat-'em-up purists happy.

Of course, with every console having its fair share of 3D beat-'em-ups at the moment, *Soul Calibur II* certainly isn't going to have an easy job on its hands. Hopefully though, the *Soul Calibur* pedigree will be more than enough to convince gamers that the Stage of History is well worth revisiting.

DON'T I KNOW YOU?

The big news about *Soul Calibur II* is the inclusion of one famous character unique to each format – namely Link on GameCube, comic book character Spawn on Xbox and *Tekken* boss Heihachi Mishima on PlayStation2. While the GameCube version is likely to prove extremely popular thanks to Link, we can't help feeling that the 'Cube's tiny D-pad and unsuitable button layout could hinder the game's playability. Heihachi initially looks out of place but can hand out plenty of punishment, even without a weapon. Over on the Xbox, Spawn blends in very well visually, but early footage of his moves suggests that he may not fit into the series as much as we might have hoped…

"SOUL CALIBUR II SUCCESSFULLY COMBINES ENHANCED VISUALS WITH IMPROVED GAMEPLAY TO CREATE A WORTHY SEQUEL"



COMPANY PROFILE

■ Founded in Tokyo in 1955, Namco has always been heavily involved within the coin-op industry. Responsible in the early Eighties for the *Pac-Man* phenomenon, it later boosted the PSX by porting titles such as *Tekken* and *Ridge Racer*. Whilst maintaining strong ties with Sony, it has now started to branch out to rival formats.

HISTORY

- **MR DRILLER** 2000 [Multiformat]
- **FINAL LAP** 1987 [Arcade]
- **PAC-MAN** 1980 [Multiformat]

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

SLICING SOUL CALIBUR II INTO LITTLE PIECES

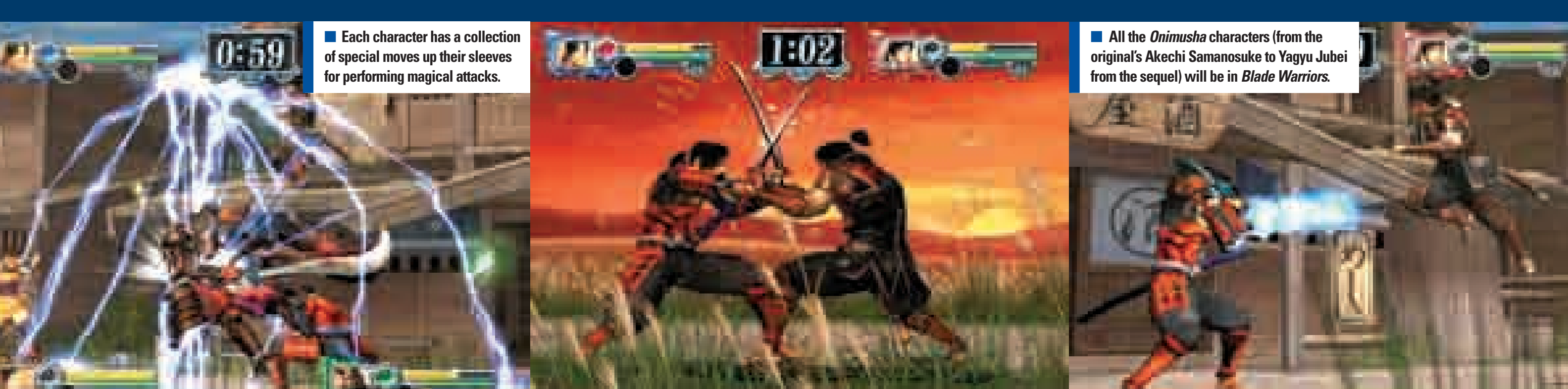
DEAD OR ALIVE 3 + SAMURAI SHODOWN + TODD MCFARLANE = SOUL CALIBUR II

■ So, does Link really fit in? Well, actually he does – he's fast and pretty tough to boot.

■ Bizarrely, Heihachi doesn't have a weapon – instead, he uses odd Wonder Woman-esque bracelets.

■ He's tricky at first, but Raphael is easily one of the best new fighters available.

ONIMUSHA: BLADE WARRIORS



■ Each character has a collection of special moves up their sleeves for performing magical attacks.

■ All the *Onimusha* characters (from the original's Akechi Samanosuke to Yagyu Jubei from the sequel) will be in *Blade Warriors*.

SLAUGHTERING THE DEMON HORDES OF FEUDAL JAPAN ISN'T JUST A ONE-MAN JOB ANY MORE…

DETAILS

FORMAT: PS2
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Capcom
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: TBA
GENRE: Slash-'em-up
PLAYERS: 1-4

■ The *Onimusha* series gets a 3D multiplayer fighter. Is this the *Power Stone* follow-up we've been waiting for?

"CAPCOM COULD BE REVIVING ONE OF ITS MOST TREASURED TITLES BY COMBINING IT WITH ONE THAT'S TOTALLY DIFFERENT"

Capcom's recent announcement that it was already working on the next instalment of the *Onimusha* series didn't come as a shock to most of the people who heard it. Of course, this might have had something to do with the huge *Onimusha 3* logo that appeared at the end of *Onimusha 2*, and Capcom isn't exactly fond of calling it a day when a series is doing well. What did surprise us though, is that in the midst of announcing the development of *Onimusha 3*, Capcom also let slip about another upcoming title – one that, while based in the world of *Onimusha*, may be a reincarnation of a certain game we've loved since it first appeared on the Dreamcast.

Blending the feudal Japan stylings of the other *Onimusha* games with some seriously intense multiplayer fighting, *Onimusha: Blade Warriors* takes the series in a markedly different direction to what we're used to. It's a brave move for such an established series, especially when you consider the fanbase that may be expecting more of the same (although that's what *Onimusha 3* is for). Basically, you can forget all about the '*Resident Evil* in Japan' adventure elements – in their place comes what Capcom itself describes as "multi-battle action" that offers a combination of gorgeous graphics and hard-core fighting.

Of course, this could mean anything – developers are notoriously vague when announcing games out of the blue – so this description isn't very helpful. But the screenshots tell a different story, especially if you're familiar with some of Capcom's previous work. At first glance, *Onimusha: Blade Warriors* looks just like other feudal Japan-based multiplayer fighting titles such as *Dynasty Warriors* or *Mystic Heroes*. Look closer though, and the similarities between this and Capcom's classic 3D multiplayer beat-'em-up *Power Stone* start creeping in – in fact, the more you look, the more you'll be convinced.

With up to four people on screen at once, a wide range of characters from both *Onimusha* games (including the Genma demons), plenty of magic attacks and massive 3D arenas, could this be the pseudo-sequel to *Power Stone* that Dreamcast-owning fighting fans have been waiting for? We hope so.



■ You don't have to play as one of the good guys – those of you with a dark streak will be dying to take control of one of the Genma…


eMag

LARA CROFT TOMB RAIDER: THE ANGEL OF DARKNESS

"A NEW LARA CROFT FOR A NEW GENERATION – THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS VIDEOGAME CHARACTER RETURNS IN HER GREATEST ADVENTURE YET"
EIDOS PRESS RELEASE



See? We'd rather have undead knights with swords over gun-toting heavies any day of the week.

Lara's new 'last chance' grab makes achieving those extra-long jumps all the more difficult…

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

CROFT ORIGINAL? PERHAPS…

TOMB RAIDER + MGS2 x GYMNASTICS = LCTR: TAOD

TOMB RAIDER: ANGEL OF DARKNESS

PC/MULTIFORMAT



COMPANY PROFILE

■ Founded by Jeremy Heath-Smith in 1988, Core Design is one of the most well-established UK software developers with over fifty successful titles under its belt such as *Rick Dangerous, Curse Of Enchantia* and *Premiere*. However, the company is best known for creating and milking the *Tomb Raider* series for all its worth.

HISTORY

- **TOMB RAIDER** 1996 [PSone]
- **CHUCK ROCK** 1991 [Amiga]
- **RICK DANGEROUS** 1988 [Amiga]

NEW LARA, NEW DANGER – BUT WILL EIDOS EVER GET AROUND TO RELEASING IT?

Good old Lara Croft – there really is no stopping her in her quest to become the world's most recognisable videogame character. Sure, she might have been nearly buried alive, shot at, chased by a prehistoric T-Rex and even bled dry at the hands of the Hollywood corporate machine in the process, but it seems to be working. Ask any gamer from the more modern school of thought to name a female game character and you'll most likely hear Ms Croft as a reply. It's strange, considering there hasn't been a new *Tomb Raider* game on a home console since 2000 (and, even worse, a decent one since 1998) – although the fact that Lara's latest outing has been in development for ages might go some way to explaining it.

Anticipation for the latest *Tomb Raider* game (or *Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Angel Of Darkness*, to give it its full name – yes, the character has grown bigger than the game) has been growing since the game's announcement in March last year. Of course, up until now Eidos and developer Core Design have been very cagey at to what the game actually entails – releasing a handful of screens and a few PR-styled phrases (including 'New Lara, new attitude!', as if that actually means anything) doesn't give an impression of how the game actually plays. Having now sat down for a solid few hours with a proper preview version though, we've got more of an idea.

And the verdict? It's *Tomb Raider* again, albeit in a slightly snazzier shell. Core has chosen to improve what's already there rather than start again from the ground up, which is obviously not that bad a decision. The major enhancements come in several different forms, most noticeably in the depiction of Lara herself. Now more agile than ever, Lara seems easier to control – along with a handful of new moves (such as shimmying along poles and hand-over-hand rock climbing) and a more flexible camera, there's now more variety in how you achieve your goals.

The game also offers several gameplay styles, depending on which level you're on – while pistols at dawn is still the order of the day when faced with evil villains and vicious creatures, stealth is now much more important in certain situations. Moving swiftly between frantic gunplay and more methodical puzzle elements is always something the *Tomb Raider* series has tried to do, though not always with success. This time though, Core appears to have incorporated areas more faithful to the original. Indeed, one stage we saw was strangely familiar – a chamber with four doors, leading to four different themed rooms with puzzles in each. Honestly, it's almost like they've read our minds about what we want…

There's little doubt in anyone's mind that *Angel Of Darkness* is going to do well when (or even if) it comes out in late May/early June. Thankfully, from what we've seen so far Lara might actually deserve her success by offering a decent game to play, rather than simply riding off the back of past accolades. However, there may still a bit too much of the 'more action/less puzzles' formula (the kind that took all the enjoyment out of *Tomb Raider 2*) present in *Angel Of Darkness*. The sooner Lara stops messing around and gets back to actually raiding tombs, the better.

DETAILS

FORMAT: PS2/PC
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: Eidos Interactive
DEVELOPER: Core Design
RELEASE: June '03
GENRE: Action/Adventure
PLAYERS: 1

■ Lara's back with an all-new adventure, all-new moves and an all-new partner. The question is, will it really be as new as we might be led to believe?

LARA CROFT: SILENT ASSASSIN

In a page ripped straight out of the *Hitman* notebook, *Angel Of Darkness* allows gamers to decide how to complete each level of the game. The opening level in Paris, for example, has Lara trying to avoid the attention of the police – do you play it stealthy and sneak through the backstreets, or head up to the rooftops and use her superior jumping abilities to escape that way? The choice, as they say, is yours. However, taking the more complex routes will reward you with increased abilities such as faster running, longer jumps or better grip for hanging onto ledges.

"BETTER LOOKING, BUT WITH SIMILAR GAMEPLAY – MORE EVOLUTION THAN REVOLUTION"



■ Sick of those annoying 'one slip and you're dead' bits? Now you can hold a button and 'stick' to narrow ledges.

■ It's not all tight shorts for Lara – she also gets to wear bum-hugging jeans too.

ARMORED CORE 3

BUILD THE MOTHER OF ALL THINGS ARMOURED AND SEE WHAT MISCHIEF YOU CAN GET INTO

PS2 **Earlier this year, *Armored Core 3* stormed into the Japanese games charts, hogging the number one slot for several weeks.** But when the game reaches our shores later this month is it likely to enjoy the same runaway success? Well, considering the previous *Armored Core* titles were only able to attract a limited UK following to the whole mech-based shooter concept, and as this latest sequel offers little more than fine-tuning to the gameplay of its predecessors, it may struggle to convince newcomers.

So just what is the Japanese obsession with these metal monsters? Surely the overload of cute and cuddly games heroes in the Japanese market, despatching their equally cute and cuddly foes in the most humane ways possible, must build up quite a thirst for gamers to get their hands on some really, really, heavy artillery. And what better for a break from adventuring in a brightly coloured 'happyland' than by taking to the mean streets of a dark and dismal future to obliterate anything that moves?

Part of the limited appeal over here may be the sad truth that when it comes down to a shootout most of us just don't like getting our hands dirty any more, preferring instead to use strategy or stealth for picking off enemies without suffering so much as a scratch ourselves. *AC3* takes a rather different approach – combat is fast and furious, based on the premise that scraping through a mission by taking less flack than your mech manages to dish out is a job well done.

Fortunately, this 'all guns blazing' approach doesn't degenerate into a button-bashing frenzy of a shooter, and can be credited with requiring brain as well as a huge amount of brawn. Half of the skill is in building yourself a mech to suit your desired style of play. Of course, on the one hand, this allows players to create the meanest mother of all things armoured for the simple purpose of snow-ploughing a path through the level; but if you want your creation to sting like a bee, don't expect it to float like a butterfly with all that excess armour plating. To survive many of the missions on offer it's far more advisable to take out a more sleek and nimble mech, capable of ducking and weaving its way past the barrages of enemy fire.

The third instalment in the series contains more scope than ever for customising your mech, lending greater variety to the gameplay style and design possibilities. Similarly, the Arena Battle mode provides a welcome break from the main mission choices, allowing your carefully tuned mech to battle over 70 opponents en route to the top of a league table in true *Victory Boxing* style.

Of course, it's worth remembering that these promises of variation within *AC3* are all essentially around a very limited theme. If you see yourself as someone who could blast the heck out of robots all day long and still be hungry for plenty more of the same, *AC3* delivers in abundance. If you don't quite share this passion for mech battle shenanigans it can be a theme that grows very tiresome, very quickly.

The previous *Armored Core* titles divided gamers into those who loved it and those whose experience of the game soon became very dull and frustrating. We can't see how the slight improvements on what's already been can really open up the *Armored Core* concept to the mass market, but this incarnation might just offer enough additional appeal to significantly widen its hard-core fanbase…

DETAILS

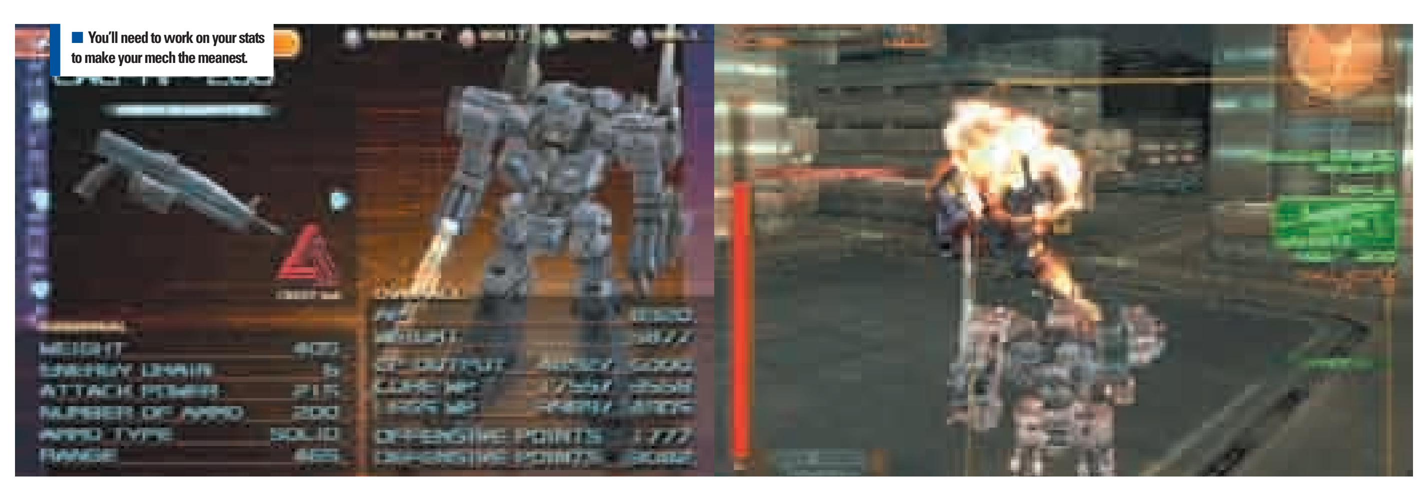
FORMAT: PS2
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Metro3D Europe
DEVELOPER: FROM Software
RELEASE: 17 May (Japan/US: Out Now)
GENRE: Mecha
PLAYERS: 1-4

■ Building and piloting your own walking armoury has never been so much fun – if you like that sort of thing…

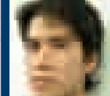
DON'T SCRATCH THE PAINTWORK

A lot of the game's lasting appeal comes from spending the credits earned during your missions on increasingly impressive hardware for your mech. Even in the darkest moments of frustration, you're spurred on by a desire to get your hands on this season's must-have carnage-inflicting accessory – there's even a paint palette option to ensure your ride is the sharpest looking mech out there. That said, it's all very well having a mean looking AC unit, but take it into an Arena match poorly suited to the terrain type and chances are your paintwork won't last very long…

"ANY PROMISES OF VARIATION IN ARMORED CORE 3 ARE ALL AROUND A VERY LIMITED THEME"



■ You'll need to work on your stats to make your mech the meanest.



PRODUCER PROFILE

■ Since joining FROM Software in 1998 as a planner on *Armored Core: Master Of Arena*, Kenichiro Tsukuda has played an active role in the production of the entire *Armored Core* series. Most recently, he was the main producer for *Armored Core 3* and its follow-up title, *Armored Core 3: Silent Line*.

HISTORY

- ■ **AC3: SILENT LINE** 2003 [PS2]
- ■ **AC2: ANOTHER AGE** 2002 [PS2]
- ■ **ARMORED CORE 2** 2002 [PS2]

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

MORE FINE TUNING, SAME ENGINE

ARMORED CORE 2 + NEW TOYS + LOVE IT/HATE IT = ARMORED CORE 3

"ARMORED CORE 3 ENJOYED A LONG STAY AT THE TOP OF THE JAPANESE GAME CHARTS AND IS SET TO REPLICATE THIS SUCCESS THROUGHOUT EUROPE"

METRO3D PRESS RELEASE

■ You can carry out missions with your mech, take it into an Arena battle or just stomp around town for a bit…

■ It doesn't matter if your mech gets damaged, as long as you leave your opponent worse off than you.

TAO FENG: FIST OF THE LOTUS





Each character has three Chi attacks that can be used with a simple tap of the white button. Sadly, most don't look as impressive as this.

CAN THE MAN RESPONSIBLE FOR MORTAL KOMBAT OUTDO HIS OWN CREATION?

DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Microsoft
DEVELOPER: Studio Gigante
RELEASE: May '03 (US: Out Now)
GENRE: Beat-'em-up
PLAYERS: 1-2

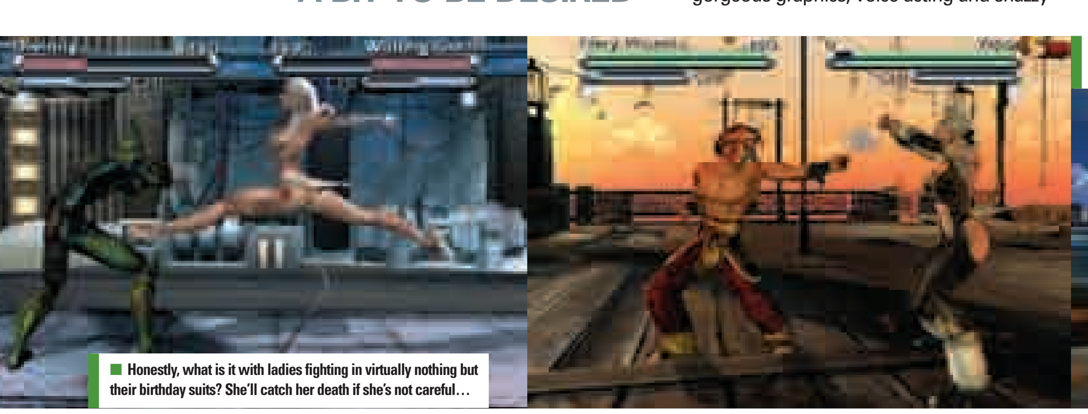
John Tobias (one of the duo behind *Mortal Kombat*) sinks his teeth back into the beat-'em-up world, as Microsoft tries to forget that *Kakuto Chojin* ever happened.

Don't you hate it when a game gets wildly hyped up, only to find out that it's not actually any good? Well, so do we. That's why when we finally managed to get our hands on preview code for *Tao Feng: Fist Of The Lotus* – a game that Microsoft and many specialist games mags have been pushing as being something pretty special – we were a trifle disappointed. This is probably because, on paper, *Tao Feng* has more than enough going for it, not least its lovely looks, but it still somehow disappoints.

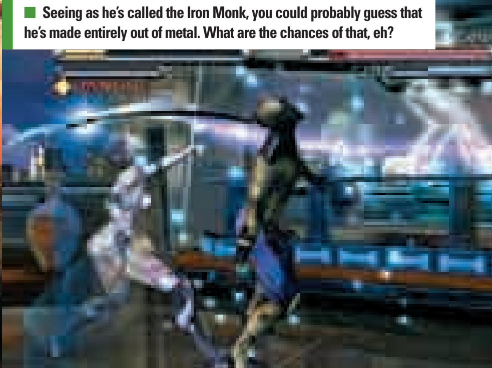
By combining a *Dead Or Alive*-esque visual style of rock-hard blokes and well-endowed ladies shown in immense detail (plus some rather good voice talent to match), *Tao Feng* provides just about the right atmosphere that you'd expect from a fighting game based around the theme of ancient Chinese parables and warring sects. There are also plenty of unique touches that make it sound more interesting than standard beat-'em-up fare. With interactive fighting arenas that allow you to bounce off walls and swing round poles before attacking, specific limb damage that'll reduce your attack power if you take too much punishment to a particular part of the body, and a massive Quest mode that'll take ages to complete, it's almost enough to make you pre-order it now… almost.

> "DESPITE CONTAINING MORE THAN ENOUGH GOOD IDEAS, THE WAY THEY'RE EXECUTED LEAVES A BIT TO BE DESIRED"

Of course, everybody knows that gorgeous graphics, voice acting and snazzy effects can't make up for bad gameplay. Unfortunately, having sat down with *Tao Feng* for a fair amount of time (in single and two-player modes), this is the one area of the game that we're concerned about. With not long to go until *Tao Feng* comes out in the UK, it's unclear how near to completion our preview build was. Considering that a few eyebrows were raised over certain collision detection issues, some of the more interesting ideas not being implemented to full effect and the slightly dubious over-reliance on combos, we're hoping these concerns might be sorted out before the final release. There are already a couple of decent beat-'em-ups on the Xbox, so *Tao Feng* needs to really impress. The last thing we want is another pile of *Kakuto Chojin* on our hands…



Honestly, what is it with ladies fighting in virtually nothing but their birthday suits? She'll catch her death if she's not careful…



Seeing as he's called the Iron Monk, you could probably guess that he's made entirely out of metal. What are the chances of that, eh?


eMag

FREEDOM: SOLDIERS OF LIBERTY



VIDEOGAMES MATHS

LOOK OUT – HERE COME THE RUSKIES

CONFLICT: DESERT STORM + STALIN x ACTION = FREEDOM

"THE EMPHASIS IS ON ACTION. WE FELT IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT THE PACE SHOULDN'T SLOW DOWN WHEN YOU'RE HANDLING ALL YOUR TROOPS"

MARTIN GULDBÆK, IO INTERACTIVE

Finding a good vantage point is the perfect way of getting the drop on Soviet installations.

Completing secondary objectives can help to make your life a lot easier in later missions.

FREEDOM: SOLDIERS OF LIBERTY

PS2/MULTIFORMAT



COMPANY PROFILE

Formed as a joint venture between Nordisk Film & TV A/S and game developer Reto-Moto, IO Interactive is now one of the leading developers in Denmark. Since 1998, they have grown from employing around 15 people to over a hundred across various departments today.

HISTORY

- **HITMAN 2: SILENT ASSASSIN** 2002 [Multi]
- **HITMAN: CODENAME 47** 2000 [PC]



To coin a phrase, the use of lethal force has been authorised…

AMERICA – HOME OF THE BRAVE, THE FREE AND NOW THE RUSSIANS BY THE LOOKS OF THINGS…

Here's one for the history fans out there – have you ever wondered what would have happened if Germany had won World War II? What about if the Japanese had dropped the bomb on the US first? Or if the Russians had come out on top during the Cold War? Whatever might have happened, the world certainly wouldn't be what it is today, and it's a scenario that Electronic Arts thinks is worth investigating if what we've seen of *Freedom: Soldiers Of Liberty* is anything to go by. Created by Danish developer IO Interactive, whose previous successes include the *Hitman* games, *Freedom* tosses you into a world of politics gone mad, with Russia overcoming America, slapping it down and then invading its shores.

"We picked the story after remembering the movie *Red Dawn* and thinking the concept of the Soviets invading the United States was really great," says Martin Guldbæk, co-lead designer on *Freedom*. "It was really the only realistic enemy that we thought would actually be able to invade the United States and win. When we came up with the game, we wanted the Americans to be the underdogs for once."

It's not just America that plays David to the Soviets' Goliath though. Considering you start the game as an innocent plumber who gets drawn into the war after his brother gets arrested by the KGB ("Nintendo has had great success with plumbers, so why can't we?" smiles Martin), the odds are stacked against you from the word go. Of course, you're not alone in your battle against oppression – *Freedom* is a squad-based game, which means you have to lead your own band of freedom fighters (which increases in size as the game goes on) against the Soviets.

Unlike many of the other squad-based 3D action games around though, the emphasis in *Freedom* is firmly on action… and lots of it. "What we felt was important is that when you're handling all your troops, the pace shouldn't slow down," says Martin. "That's why the commands you can use – like sending people to follow you, guard a position, search an area or attack – are pretty simple. It's all done off the same button, depending on the situation. Once you issue a command, the characters will work out what to do depending on where you send them."

It's through the use of allied and enemy AI routines similar to those in the *Hitman* series that *Freedom* manages to offer a high level of intelligence for NPCs as well as a distinctly random element in the gameplay. Enemy soldiers, for example, don't always appear in the same location or act in the same way when you encounter them. Combining this with *Freedom*'s distinctly open mission structure means that every game is unique. "Hopefully, each player will have different experiences when playing each level, which is an important thing for us," says Martin. "It's something we learnt from developing *Hitman*, so we wanted to use it in *Freedom* as well to increase the replay value."

Having spent a few hours with an early preview demo of *Freedom*, we have to say that we're impressed. The game isn't out until the end of the year, yet the solidity of the engine and the quality of the gameplay is already incredibly high. In fact, how much better IO can make it isn't really the issue. If the finished game turned out as good as the version we played, we'd be happy.

DETAILS

FORMAT: PS2, Xbox, PC
ORIGIN: Denmark
PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts
DEVELOPER: IO Interactive
RELEASE: Q4
GENRE: Action Adventure
PLAYERS: 1-4

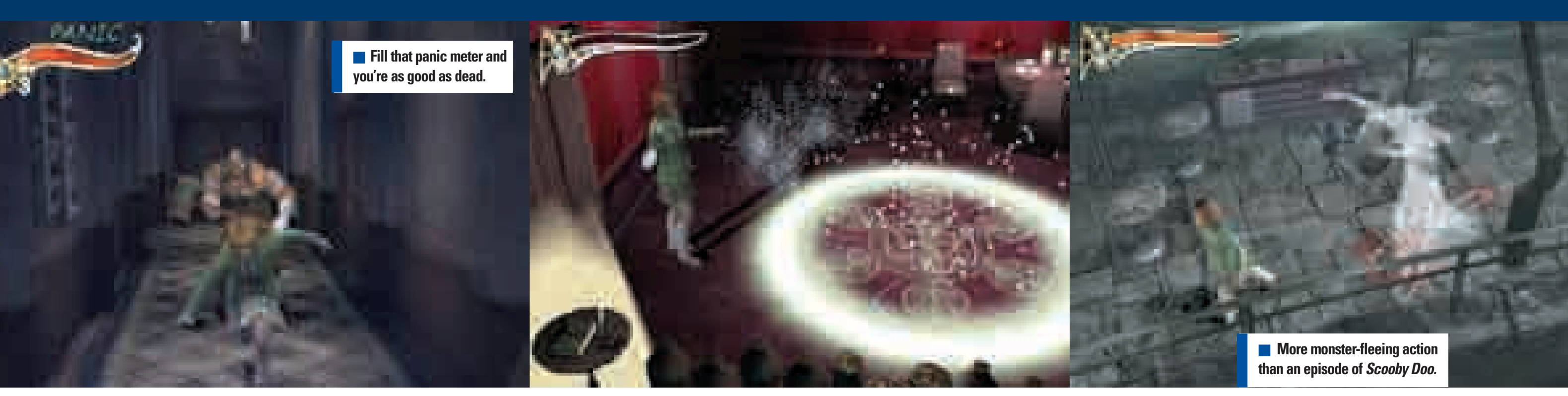
A squad-based shoot-'em-up with the emphasis on gun-blazing action rather than strategy.

CALL ME MR CHARISMA

If you want to force the Soviets out for good, you'll need as many freedom fighters on your side as possible. Unfortunately, you can't just expect everyone you meet to join your ranks – you'll have to earn the respect of your fellow soldiers before they'll follow you. That's where Charisma comes into play. As you explore each Soviet-controlled zone and complete various tasks, you'll gain Charisma points. For every hundred points you earn, you'll get a Charisma slot that lets you recruit one freedom fighter. Get it right and you can have up to 12 people on your team for those vital missions.

"THE FRANTIC PACE OF THE GAME MAKES FREEDOM FEEL MORE EXCITING THAN ALL THE SQUAD-BASED TITLES WE'VE SEEN"

CLOCK TOWER 3



■ Fill that panic meter and you're as good as dead.

■ More monster-fleeing action than an episode of *Scooby Doo.*

WILL IT BE THIRD TIME LUCKY FOR CLOCK TOWER WITH CAPCOM AT THE HELM?

PS2 **We have to admit that if, on the off chance, some unearthly beast from hell were to turn up looking for a scrap, we'd be off like a shot.** Yet, inexplicably, our computer generated counterparts seem much more inclined to come over all heroic and opt instead for a spot of fisticuffs. Refreshingly, young schoolgirl Alyssa – star of forthcoming survival horror romp *Clock Tower 3* – shares our sentiments when it comes to life-threatening confrontations.

Granted, a chance stumbling upon some conveniently mislaid firearms would certainly broaden the options for demonstrating her bravery, but unfortunately young Alyssa enjoys no such luxury. Relying only on a vial of holy water and the occasional interactive piece of scenery to keep at bay the hordes of ghoulish nasties intent on bringing a premature halt to her adventures, Alyssa is forced to spend much of her time either running or hiding.

This is quite a departure in strategy for a Capcom horror adventure, considering its flagship *Resident Evil* series provided us with enough artillery to turn any number of undead legions into mulch. Instead, one of the most important aspects of the game for players to contend with is the *Eternal Darkness*-esque Panic Meter, which must be closely monitored when the going gets tough to prevent our heroine slipping into a state of mindless panic. Allowing fear to get the better of Alyssa is not the best idea, as it results in losing control of her movements, placing her at the wicked mercy of her pursuant. And believe us, these aren't the kind of chaps you want to be placed at the mercy of.

The Servants of Evil, as they are collectively known, include a deranged monstrosity wielding a giant hammer and a serial killer who seems worryingly keen on showering his victims in sulphuric acid. Whilst these creations do look fantastically gruesome, their brutal capabilities don't really have the same effect as the psychological chills that cause some horror games to really bring out the goosebumps. That said, focusing gameplay on the racing heartbeat of the lead character causes similar effects for the player. Playing with the lights off and gamepad vibrations reaching an alarming climax as death begins to look inescapable, it can be hard not to feel as though you're right there in Alyssa's shoes.

Can Capcom successfully challenge the likes of *Eternal Darkness* or *Silent Hill* in the scare stakes with this non-heroic slant on the horror survival theme? We'll let you know as soon as we're played the finished version.

"FOCUSING GAMEPLAY ON THE RACING HEARTBEAT OF THE LEAD CHARACTER CAN'T HELP BUT SIMILARLY AFFECT PLAYERS"

DETAILS

FORMAT: PS2
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Capcom
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: Summer '03 (Japan/US: Out Now)
GENRE: Survival Horror
PLAYERS: 1

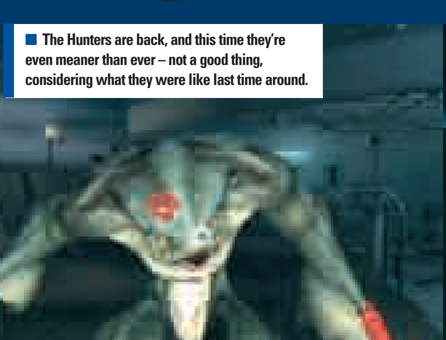
■ Save your family and put an end to the Servants of Evil. And if anyone gets in your way… run away screaming.



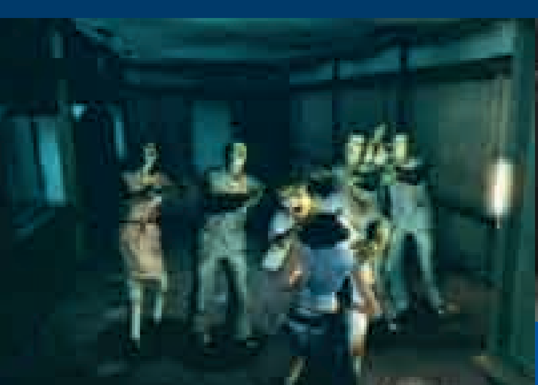
■ Later in the game a magical bow lets you dish out some payback.

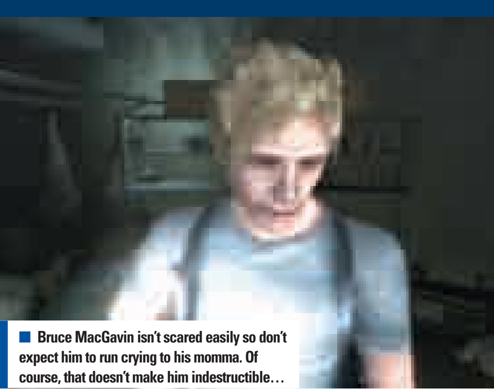

eMag

RESIDENT EVIL: DEAD AIM



The Hunters are back, and this time they're even meaner than ever – not a good thing, considering what they were like last time around.





Bruce MacGavin isn't scared easily so don't expect him to run crying to his momma. Of course, that doesn't make him indestructible…

GODDAMMIT – WON'T THOSE FOOLS AT THE UMBRELLA CORPORATION EVER LEARN?

DETAILS

FORMAT: PS2
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Capcom
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: 27 June (Japan/US: Out Now)
GENRE: Lightgun
PLAYERS: 1

Capcom finally pulls its finger out and delivers a game that not only caters for the lightgun fans, but captures the essence of the *Resident Evil* series.

PS2 **Lightgun games are all pretty similar these days – you point the gun at the screen and shoot anything that moves (and sometimes anything that doesn't), but the action happens automatically and you're just carried along for the ride.** But it doesn't have to be like that, and the next generation of screen-blasting titles is just around the corner. Along with the impending release of Empire's shooting/driving amalgamation *Starsky And Hutch* to prove that lightgun games don't just have to be about riding rails and reloading ammo, Capcom looks set to take the same step itself – albeit back into the world of survival horror.

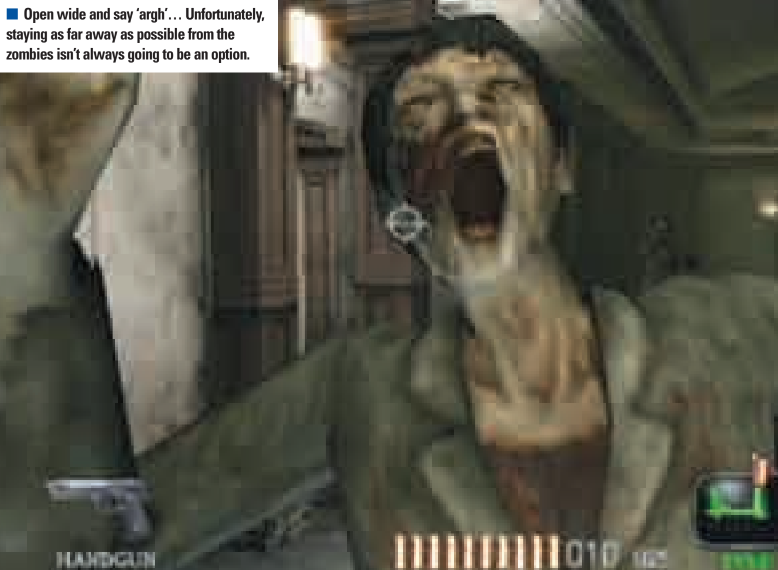
Having already produced three enjoyable but fairly unimpressive *Gun Survivor* titles for the PS2, Capcom says it's finally "got the *Gun Survivor* series right" with *Resident Evil: Dead Aim*. You see, unlike the previous outings that were rather linear and simplistic, *RE: Dead Aim* is a 'proper' *Resident Evil*-style game. So that means you'll be controlling lead hero Bruce MacGavin (along with a mysterious female character at certain points) from a third-person viewpoint, picking up items, opening doors and solving puzzles in the way only the *Resident Evil* games can. It's even got a suitably twisted plot to accompany the action – a crazed scientist steals the T-Virus and sabotages a cruise liner, so Umbrella sends in its own man to destroy the zombies and take out their creator.

The real twist is that the adventure part of the game is still controlled using the G-Con 2 – the D-pad on the back controls Bruce's movements, while the various buttons allow you to examine your surroundings and pick up objects. If you need to defend yourself then a quick pull on the trigger sends you into first-person mode, meaning you can blast away with the G-Con 2 as per usual. The lightgun element obviously means you'll encounter a lot more zombies than normal – in fact, they're pretty much everywhere.

Combining this with some pretty frightening boss encounters and all the usual *Resident Evil* fare, *RE: Dead Aim* is looking like a game worthy of the *Resident Evil* moniker.

"THE COMBINATION OF LIGHTGUN BLASTING AND RESIDENT EVIL-STYLE EXPLORATION MAKES FOR A SUSPENSEFUL ADVENTURE"





Open wide and say 'argh'… Unfortunately, staying as far away as possible from the zombies isn't always going to be an option.


eMag

WORLD WAR II: FRONTLINE COMMAND

WAR WOULD BE SO MUCH EASIER WITH SUPER NASHWAN POWER…

You want to make a game people can identify with, relate to and will actually care about. Do you a) provide a DVD movie with your game giving new players a detailed back story, b) write off plot as an 'unnecessary extravagance' or c) base your game around a well-known event or place, negating the need for any further information? These days, it seems most developers would rather opt for the latter – a point that the ever-growing number of licensed and reality-based games go a fair way to proving. One of the most popular subject matters, particularly in terms of PC software, is World War 2 – an event so famous that players can just jump straight into the game and know what's going on. So we did.

From the archive footage and lavish presentation that adorns the front end of the game, you already know to expect a fairly accurate portrayal of the events of the Second World War. Sure enough, give or take a little artistic licence to retain playability, those who are even a little clued up on their history will recognise names, campaigns, units and locations – the desired effect is achieved even if just the word Panzer rings a bell. The units have been faithfully realised even down to engine sounds, to the point where a distant unit could be instantly recognised by sound alone.

In a strange and interesting twist, morale is as important to your troops as anything else – taking excessive casualties will turn your remaining soldiers into gibbering wrecks while excelling on the battlefield could be the catalyst for a daring and heroic victory. Forget the 'build huge army, move to point B, clear mission' RTS games of yesteryear – this is war and if you waste what you get, you only have yourself to blame. Removing the ubiquitous resource management aspect is a noble decision and one that has been made to reward true player skill and tactics rather than how fast a person can train infantry or build tanks.

You'll have plenty of other tricks at your disposal, though. Occupying buildings, calling for air support and setting traps will play a large part in your strategic advances. To avoid confusion and a cluttered HUD, much of the display is transparent or nonexistent until required, when it springs into action and serves its purpose quickly and easily. This means you'll have a much better view of the action but, given the unforgiving nature of the game, you'll need as much control as you can get.

Visually, everything is coming together nicely – while no one visual element is outstanding, the complete package is a well-rounded and attractive one. The level of detail is among the game's finer points; from accurate lines of sight for all units (see 'In The Line Of Fire') to fully deformable buildings and landscapes, *Frontline Command* throws around more neat touches than we tend to expect from the genre and benefits greatly for it even at this early stage. It's crazy to think that this gritty realism comes from the same family as *Speedball 2* and *The Chaos Engine* but despite their differences in terms of content, the quality seems as high as it's ever been.

Seeing as how *Frontline Command* isn't just an RTS by numbers, hopes are high for the finished game. Provided that the battalion of ingenious features we've been treated to thus far doesn't go AWOL, *Frontline Command* is shaping up to be quite a treat when it reports for duty later in the year. With an add-on apparently already planned and feedback so far being highly favourable, it looks as though The Bitmap Brothers may just have picked the right game at the right time to explode back onto the gaming scene.

"FORGET THE 'BUILD HUGE ARMY, MOVE TO POINT B, CLEAR MISSION' RTS GAMES OF YESTERYEAR – THIS IS WAR"

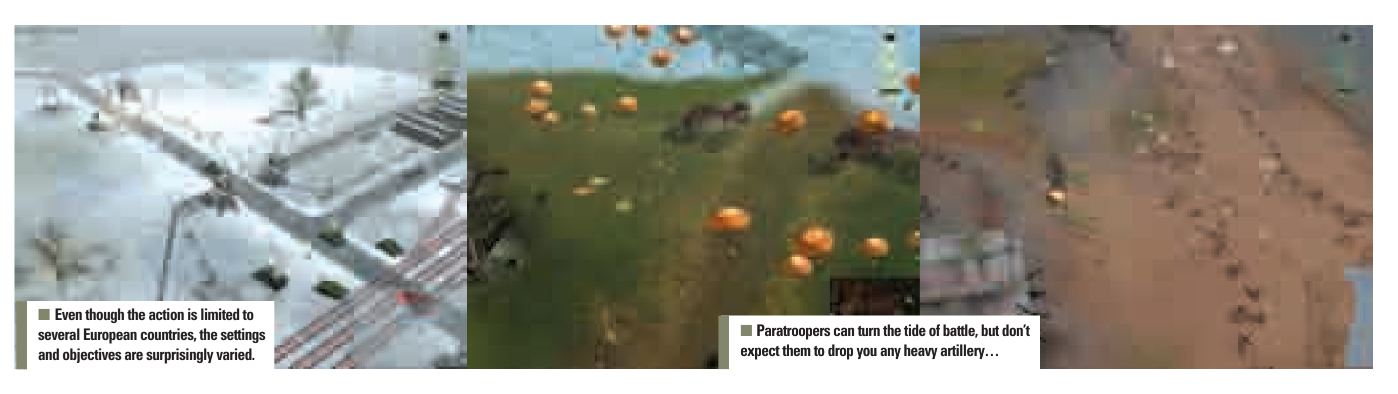
DETAILS

FORMAT: PC
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: Koch Media
DEVELOPER: Bitmap Brothers
RELEASE: TBA (Japan/US: Out Now)
GENRE: Strategy
PLAYERS: 1-4

Better known for 8- and 16-bit accomplishments, The Bitmap Brothers career into 2003 with this ambitious wartime RTS.

IN THE LINE OF FIRE

In a time when transparent foreground objects are the norm, it's nice to see a game ignore this logistical improbability. In *Frontline Command* if your soldiers can't see something, you can't see it. As annoying as this may seem, it works very well and adds an extra element of involvement as you'll need to be continually aware of your troops' positioning. In a similar way, the game has a unique line of sight system, granting units a respectable visibility range (expandable using binoculars) which is blocked in by any object that may stand in your way, be it a wall, building or tree. Interestingly, if you're able to hear an enemy nearby, you'll be made aware of his presence accordingly. This adds a whole new level of strategy that puts *Frontline Command* nearer to *Commandos* than to the piles of generic RTS games we're subjected to. We wouldn't be surprised to see this feature more often in the future.

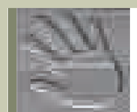


Even though the action is limited to several European countries, the settings and objectives are surprisingly varied.

Paratroopers can turn the tide of battle, but don't expect them to drop you any heavy artillery…

WORLD WAR II: FRONTLINE COMMAND

PC



COMPANY PROFILE

■ Founded in 1987, The Bitmap Brothers cut their teeth on some of the best-loved games of the 8- and 16-bit eras, including *Gods*, *Xenon 2* and the mighty *Speedball 2*. Yet to make an impact in the 21st Century, will 2003 see a return to splendour for the Bitmaps?

HISTORY

■ **THE CHAOS ENGINE** 1993 [Multi]
■ **SPEEDBALL 2** 1990 [Multi]
■ **XENON** 1988 [Multi]

"FRONTLINE COMMAND LETS ASPIRING GENERALS TURN THE TIDE OF AXIS AGGRESSION AND LIBERATE OCCUPIED EUROPE"

BITMAP BROTHERS PRESS RELEASE

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

CONFLICTING VIEWS ON WAR

COMMAND & CONQUER + COMMANDOS + MEDAL OF HONOR = WWII: FRONTLINE COMMAND

■ Fed up with squinting at the screen looking for your troops? Zoom all the way in and introduce yourself to each one in person…

■ If you're not using a building for your own strategic ends, level it before the enemy can pinch it.

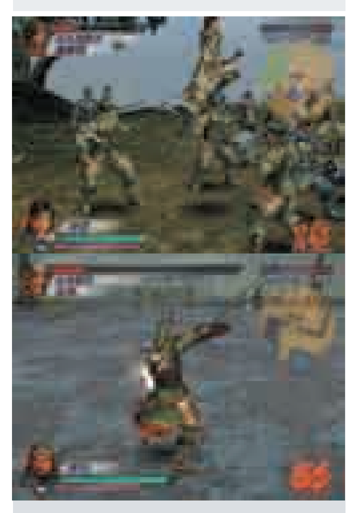
SHOWCASE

THINGS TO WATCH FOR ON THE GAMING HORIZON

DYNASTY WARRIORS 4

OFF THE TABLETOP, INTO THE FIRE

Format: PlayStation2
Origin: Japan
Publisher: Koei
Developer: In-House
Release: June
Genre: Slash-'em-up
Players: 1-2



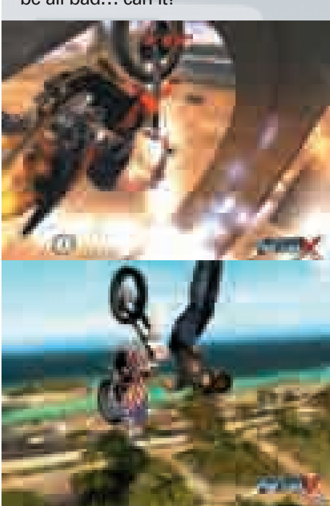
Having already sold more than a million copies in less than a month over in Japan, Koei are quite sure that *Dynasty Warriors 4* is a massive success. Of course, whether the same will happen when it hits shelves across the UK in late June is another matter entirely, but there's no doubting that it's good fun to play. Although it doesn't look that different from the last incarnation, *Dynasty Warriors 4* features tons more of… well, everything. With 50 levels over 17 unique maps, over 40 playable characters, new one-on-one battles with enemy officers, and even the chance to create your own officers and guards, we're keen to get our hands on it…

FREESTYLE METAL X

PEDAL TO THE METAL, SICK BOY

Format: PS2/Xbox/GameCube
Origin: US
Publisher: Midway Games
Developer: Midway Sports Asylum
Release: June
Genre: Racing
Players: 1-2

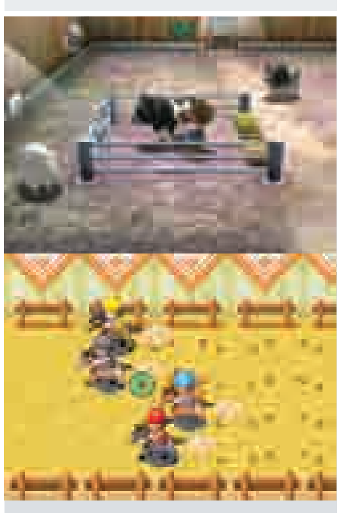
Forget about actually using motorbikes to race with; these days, you want to be performing stunts and completing goals. Such is what you can expect from *Freestyle Metal X*, Midway's attempt at leaping onto the extreme sports bandwagon. Ride your dirt bike across eight massive levels, pull off tricks and generally be "as sick as you want to be" (their words, not ours). Sounds a whole lot like THQ's dodgy *Toxic Grind* or Acclaim's dire *BMX XXX*, doesn't it? Well, yes – sadly, it does quite a bit. Still, any game that has a bona fide 'Wall Of Death' and features Mötley Crüe and Megadeth on the soundtrack can't be all bad… can it?



HARVEST MOON

RED SKY AT NIGHT, THE BARN'S ON FIRE

Format: GameCube/GBA
Origin: Japan
Publisher: Ubi Soft
Developer: Natsume
Release: October
Genre: Simulation
Players: 1



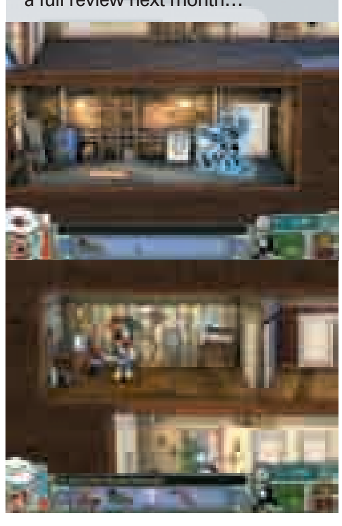
Fans of nature, rejoice – Ubi Soft has confirmed that it will be bringing both upcoming versions of *Harvest Moon* (*A Wonderful Life* for GameCube and *Friends Of Mineral Town* on the GBA) to Europe later this year. And if you've never played *Harvest Moon* before, you've really missed out on something special. While both games follow the usual farming action of previous games (tend the animals, plant crops and generally turn the farm into a profit-making success), the most interesting thing is that these new versions will link up with each other to reveal special events, items and other goodies. Here's hoping that'll only be the tip of the soil-covered iceberg…

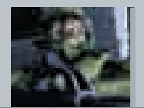
NEIGHBOURS FROM HELL

OR 'HOW TO BE A COMPLETE AND UTTER BASTARD'

Format: PC
Origin: Germany
Publisher: JoWood
Developer: In-House
Release: 23 May
Genre: Puzzle
Players: 1

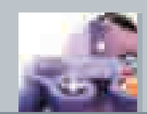
These days, it takes a lot for a game to make us laugh – and we mean really laugh, in a decidedly dirty, Sid James sort of way. That's why when *Neighbours From Hell* came into the office, we immediately fell in love with it. Despite being a relatively small puzzle title, it's got everything in it that makes games fun. The premise (breaking into your neighbour's house and playing all manner of harmful pranks on him, *Home Alone*-style) manages to last through 15 levels of head-scratching fun, and it's going to be released at the bargain price of £20 – not bad for a game that'll have you laughing like a hyena. Look for a full review next month…





DELAYED – HALO 2 (XBOX)

■ Good old Bungie and its 'it'll be ready when it's ready' attitude. Despite anticipation levels going skywards for the sequel to the Xbox's best-selling title, it's now been pushed back to some time in 2004. Bah.



CANNED – TOO MANY GAMES (GC)

■ This month sees not just one, but three games being canned for the GameCube – *Wakeboarding Unleashed* from Activision, *RTX Red Rock* from LucasArts and *Defender 2* from Midway. What a bugger, eh?

ADVANCE WARS 2

WAR, HUH – WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR?

Format: Game Boy Advance
Origin: Japan
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Intelligent Systems
Release: TBA (US: 23 June)
Genre: Strategy
Players: 1-4

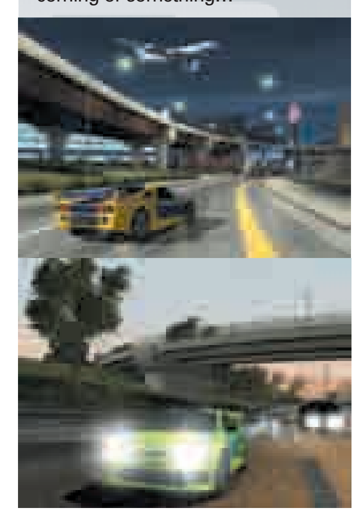
Considering that strategy games focusing on tank combat usually aren't the most exciting titles around, we're still bemused as to how *Advance Wars* ended up being such fun. In fact, it was easily one of the best games around when the handheld first launched and still ranks as a favourite. Of course, that'll probably change when *Advance Wars 2* arrives. Featuring all the same strategy-based action from the first game (except with more levels, characters and vehicles) and the 'four-players, one cartridge' link-up mode that we loved so much, this is going to be *the* game for the long summer evenings ahead.

BURNOUT 2: POINT OF IMPACT

BETTER TO BURN OUT THAN FADE AWAY

Format: Xbox/GameCube
Origin: UK
Publisher: Acclaim
Developer: Criterion Studios
Release: 16 May
Genre: Racing
Players: 1-4

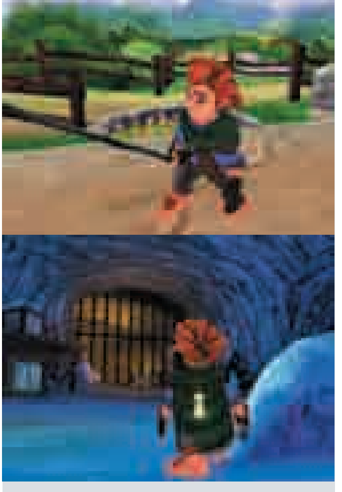
Good old Acclaim might have released some games that have fallen somewhat short of the mark, but every once in a while it actually gets things right. There are certainly a few examples of Acclaim's talent – such as *Aggressive Inline* or the N64 version of *Shadow Man* – but our favourite has to be *Burnout 2*, if only because it was an absolute gem of an arcade racer. So what happens when Acclaim makes the decision to bring the game out on GameCube and Xbox in the very near future, complete with even more arcade racing goodness? We get all excited, that's what. It's almost as if there's a blue moon coming or something…



THE HOBBIT

PACK YOUR BAGGINS – WE'RE LEAVIN'

Format: PS2/Xbox/GameCube
Origin: US
Publisher: Vivendi Universal
Developer: Inevitable Studios
Release: September
Genre: Adventure
Players: 1



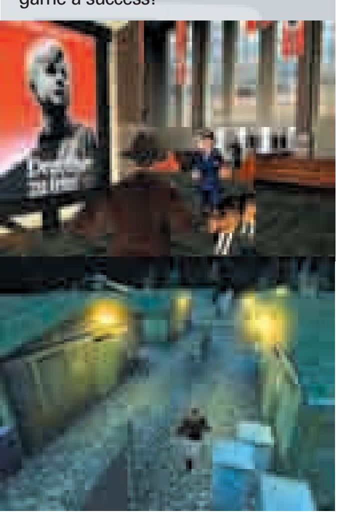
We all know that EA's *Lord Of The Rings: The Two Towers* dumped from a great height all over Vivendi's book-based attempt at the series. But that hasn't stopped Vivendi trying to make up for it with *The Hobbit* – a 3D action/adventure game based on the book of the same name. Taking a decidedly different slant on the world of Middle Earth than the last few games (as you can probably tell from the cartoon graphics), the game sticks closely to the story in the novel while also adding new areas to spice up the roaming adventure-style action. It sounds rather intriguing, but whether it'll actually be any good is another matter entirely…

THE GREAT ESCAPE

WE'VE GOT DIBS ON THE BLIND GUY

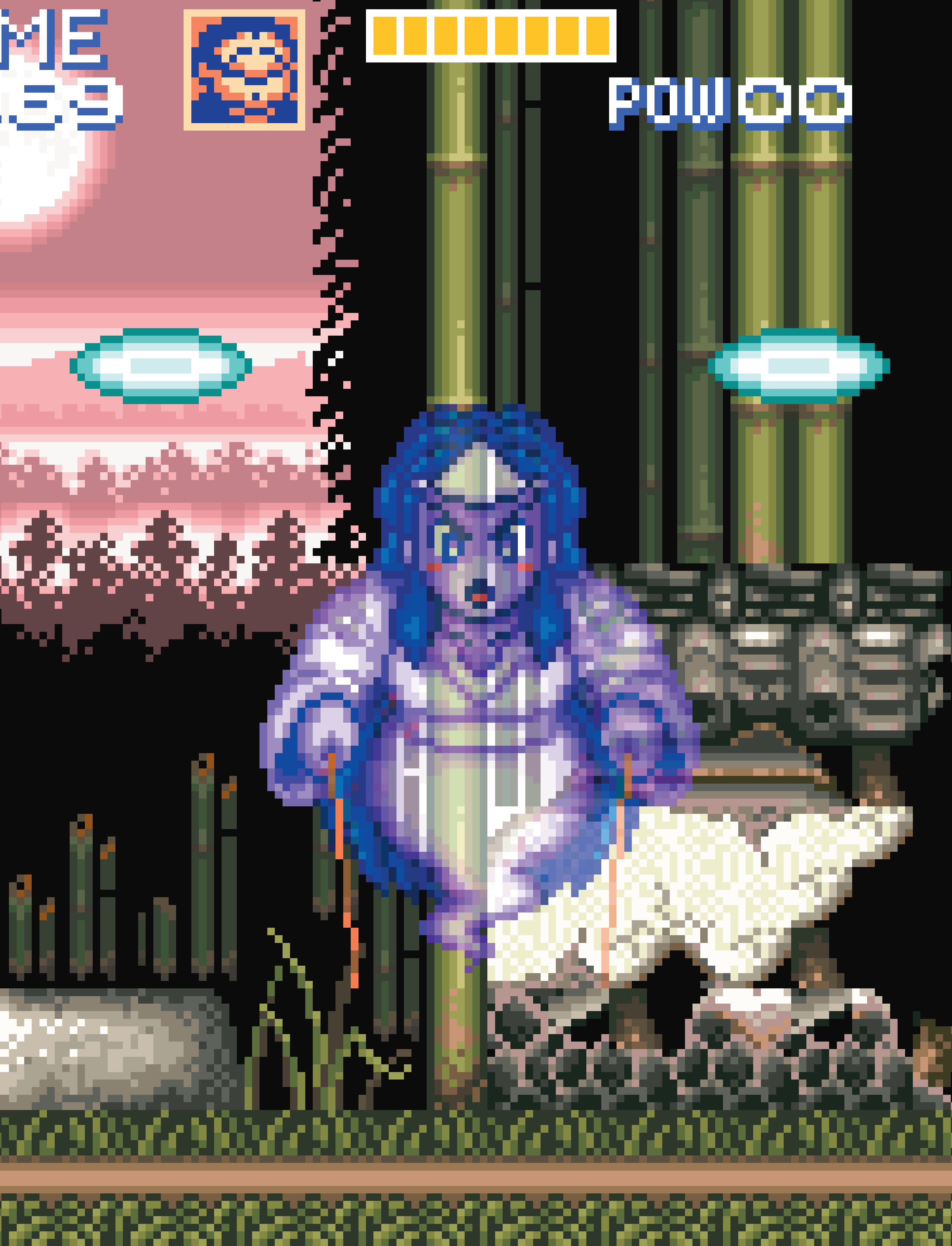
Format: PS2/Xbox/PC
Origin: UK
Publisher: SCi
Developer: Pivotal
Release: June
Genre: Action/Adventure
Players: 1

Forget converting new films into videogames – what we want to see is films that are on TV every Christmas turned into games instead. At least, that's what SCi must be thinking if *The Great Escape* is anything to go by. Sticking to the plot of the movie quite closely, the action takes the form of a squad-based game similar to *Conflict: Desert Storm* (coincidentally, another SCi game). Taking control of four characters, each with their own unique abilities, you try to escape the nightmare of Stalag Luft III. If the game does play like *Conflict: DS*, that certainly can't be a bad thing – but will it be enough to make the game a success?

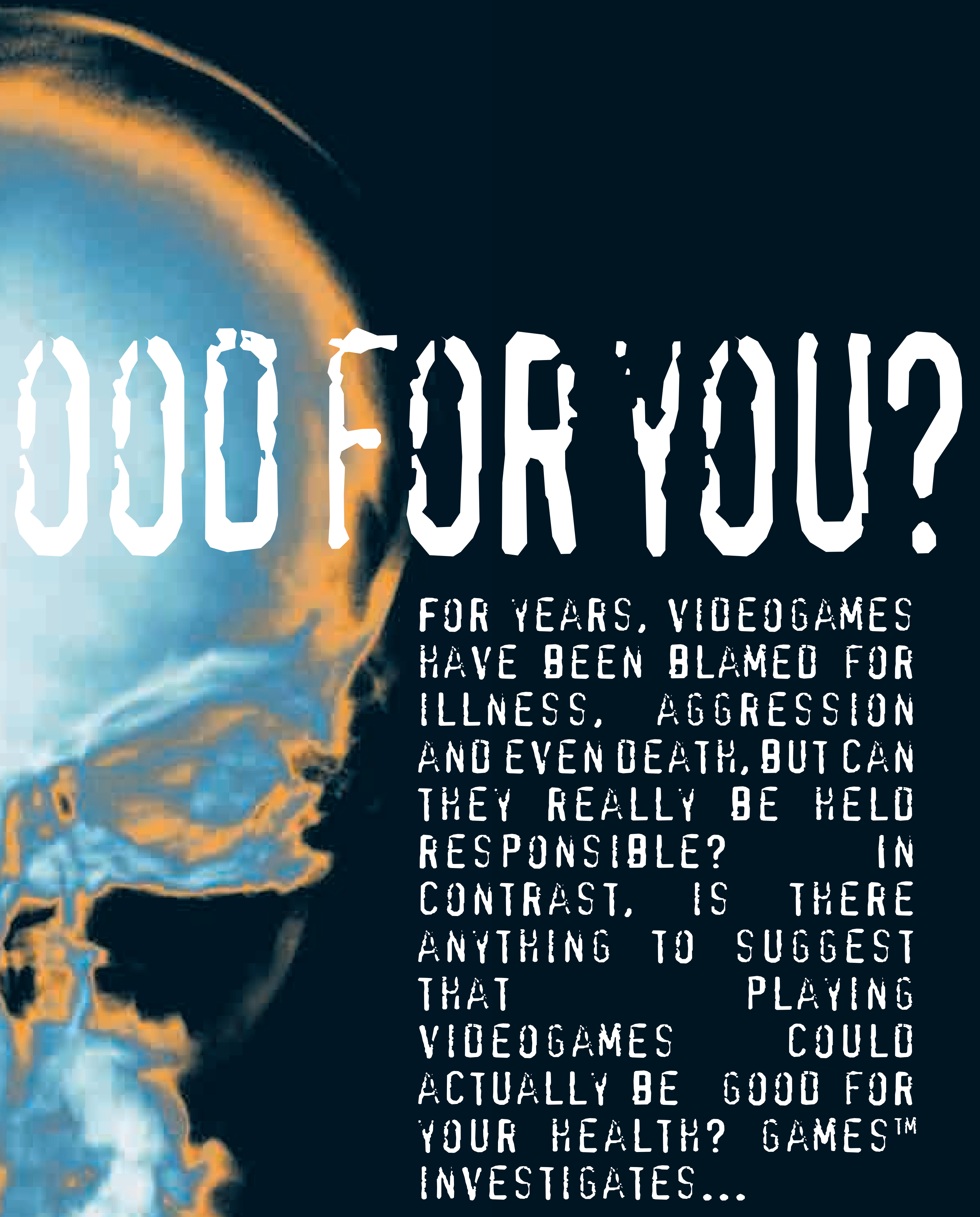




I ain't afraid of no ghost… **The Legend Of The Mystical Ninja SNES [Konami] 1991**


POW 00


ARE GAMES G



OOD FOR YOU?

FOR YEARS, VIDEOGAMES HAVE BEEN BLAMED FOR ILLNESS, AGGRESSION AND EVEN DEATH, BUT CAN THEY REALLY BE HELD RESPONSIBLE? IN CONTRAST, IS THERE ANYTHING TO SUGGEST THAT PLAYING VIDEOGAMES COULD ACTUALLY BE GOOD FOR YOUR HEALTH? GAMES™ INVESTIGATES...

BAD HABITS

'Nintendo killed my son!', 'Videogames should carry health warnings', 'Videogames increase aggression'… In today's increasingly health-conscious society, videogames have become an easy target for the press, who are looking to find new and interesting scare stories. Politicians and parents warn of the detrimental effects of pixelated violence, the health risks and the anti-social side-effects of too much gaming. But what evidence is there to prove that videogaming is an unhealthy pastime? And what about the growing belief that games might be good for you?

Last year, a woman in Baton Rouge, Louisiana sued Nintendo claiming it was responsible for her 30-year-old son's death. He collapsed and hit his head on a table while playing on his N64 – a console he used for eight hours a day, six days a week. It was suggested that he had developed a form of epilepsy since buying the console two years previously, and that his collapse was due to a seizure. For several years, videogames have carried warnings that they may be unsuitable for people with epilepsy or can even trigger epilepsy in people who didn't know they had it. But can games cause the condition?

Barbara Pinder of Epilepsy Action says that the form of epilepsy commonly associated with videogames is photosensitive epilepsy, which is triggered by flashing lights or small, 'busy' patterns. "An estimated five per cent of people with epilepsy have photosensitive epilepsy," she says. "It's

"ADDICTION IS

LOOKING GOOD

The many harmful physical effects of gaming have been widely reported, but a new breed of game is helping people stay fit while they play. For a complete body workout we suggest the following titles:

UPPER BODY: SAMBA DE AMIGO
Rhythmic shaking of novelty maracas can help tone arm and chest muscles, including biceps, triceps (to prevent 'bingo wings') and pectorals.



LOWER BODY: CYBERRIDER
Pedalling in order to progress gameplay uses leg muscles such as the quadriceps, and can help tone your gluteus maximus (anatomical ass).

CARDIO VASCULAR FITNESS: DANCING STAGE
Prolonged or fast use of dancing pad can improve cardiovascular fitness, increase muscle tone and can help weight loss (only as part of a calorie controlled diet).

Before starting on a new course of exercise, please consult your physician if you are in any doubt about your health or general fitness.

a form most common in children between the ages of six and 12, and girls are more affected than boys. The flickering light from a television screen is the most common photosensitive cause of an epileptic seizure, but other natural as well as artificial sources of light can also cause them."

As to whether using a console can 'give' you epilepsy, Epilepsy Action's research suggests that this is not the case. "Unless someone has photosensitive epilepsy, or is susceptible to the condition, there is little or no risk of them having a seizure when playing a videogame," Pinder explains. Of course, the risk of triggering latent epilepsy is increased the more you play, and most game manuals suggest taking a ten minute break every hour as well as playing on a small screen in a well-lit room – which is unfortunate seeing as how most gamers would agree that the best way to play games is on a widescreen TV with the sound up and the lights off.

Another rare side effect of too much gaming is a condition known as hard-arm vibration syndrome. Last year, Gavin Cleary, specialist registrar at Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital and Dr J Sills, a consultant paediatric rheumatologist at Alder Hey Children's Hospital in Liverpool, reported in the *British Medical Journal* the case of a 15-year-old boy who had sore, swollen hands more commonly associated with the prolonged use of industrial machinery. It turned out that the boy would play driving games with a Rumble Pak for up to seven hours a day. "It was not possible to prove that the computer game device was responsible," says Cleary, "but we reported it in the medical literature to raise awareness." As yet, there have been no further reported cases of hand-arm vibration syndrome, although less severe repetitive motion injuries are more widespread. These injuries occur when fluid builds up around joints when tendons are overused, rather like tennis elbow, and PC users have been reported to suffer from 'mouse elbow' while console gamers have been afflicted with 'joypad thumb'.

Long periods of gaming could leave gamers vulnerable to other conditions such as motion sickness or deep vein thrombosis. The latter is caused by sitting in the same position for hours on end, which can restrict blood flow and cause potentially fatal clots to form. Another side effect of long spells of inactivity is obesity, something that is becoming increasingly prevalent among children. Gavin Cleary is worried by the amount of games some children play. "I am very concerned that young people in the developed world are increasingly sedentary, [due to] TV and videogames in particular, and that this is resulting in more children developing obesity," he says. "The health problems that are associated with this will have a very significant impact in the future. I would like to see more public health messages warning against excessive participation in all sedentary activity in childhood." But perhaps these warnings may not be necessary just yet, as some arcade and videogames are not just played standing up but may actually benefit your health. ▷

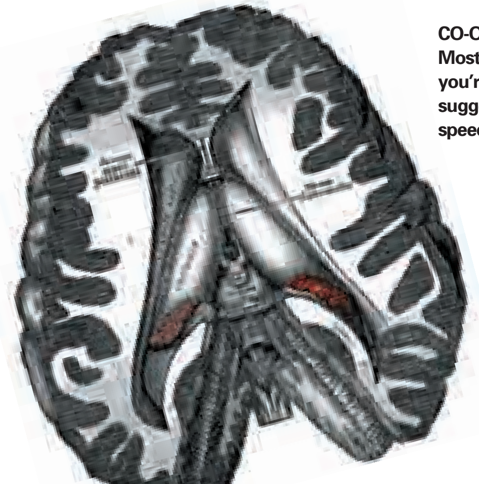
CAUSED BY A GENETIC DISORDER"

FEELING FINE

Like a game of chess or a well-crafted mystery novel, some videogames can sharpen your mental dexterity. Keeping your brain fit is as important as maintaining a healthy body – mens sana in corpore sano, and all that…

LOGIC AND LATERAL THINKING: TETRIS
The daddy of puzzle games encourages hand-eye co-ordination as well as forward-planning, spatial awareness and quick thinking.

IMPROVED REACTIONS: VIRTUA FIGHTER 4 EVOLUTION
Any beat-'em-up requires quick responses if you're to avoid a hefty shoeing. We recommend *Virtua Fighter 4 Evolution* (if you can get hold of it) or any similarly fast title to get your brain in gear.



CO-ORDINATION: TIMESPLITTERS 2
Most FPSs need a fair bit of co-ordination if you're going to get out alive. May we suggest *TimeSplitters 2* to help sir or madam speed up the hand-eye connection?

Please note that a healthy mind also requires a good dose of learning, life experience and possibly cancelling the cable TV subscription.

A NEW HOPE

Dance Dance Revolution (or *Dancing Stage* as it's officially called in the UK) takes the concept of gaming right back to basics in that there's really very little to it other than pressing four directional buttons in time with a music track. The clever part is that rather than using your hands, this Konami product uses your feet – bringing something completely new to the world of videogames whilst attracting an enormous following of gamers and non-gamers in the process. In fact, the game has become so popular that there are nationwide competitions and even comprehensive websites that are solely dedicated to playing the game. One of these is www.DDRFreak.com – a site that not only includes detailed guides on how and where to play, but also examines the physical aspect of taking part.

Cynan De Leon, software engineer and DDRFreak.com co-founder, believes the game attracts casual and 'hard-core' gamers for a range of reasons. "They might like the music, or maybe it's a videogame that a guy and his girlfriend can play together, unlike others such as *Street Fighter* or *Silent Scope*," he suggests. Of course, the game isn't just for entertainment and Leon has noticed increasing numbers of people using the machine to get fit.

"Some players may tend to treat long sessions of *DDR* as a form of exercise," he says. "People will work up a sweat playing the game, especially multiple sessions involving some of the faster songs. Many people who I have met through *DDR* have noticed increases in fitness levels – mostly weight loss and improved cardiovascular activity."

Could it be that this is a game that's good for you? Clearly, like any other physical activity it carries its risks (Leon says that sprained ankles and bruises are not uncommon), but playing the game is very similar to an aerobic workout session.

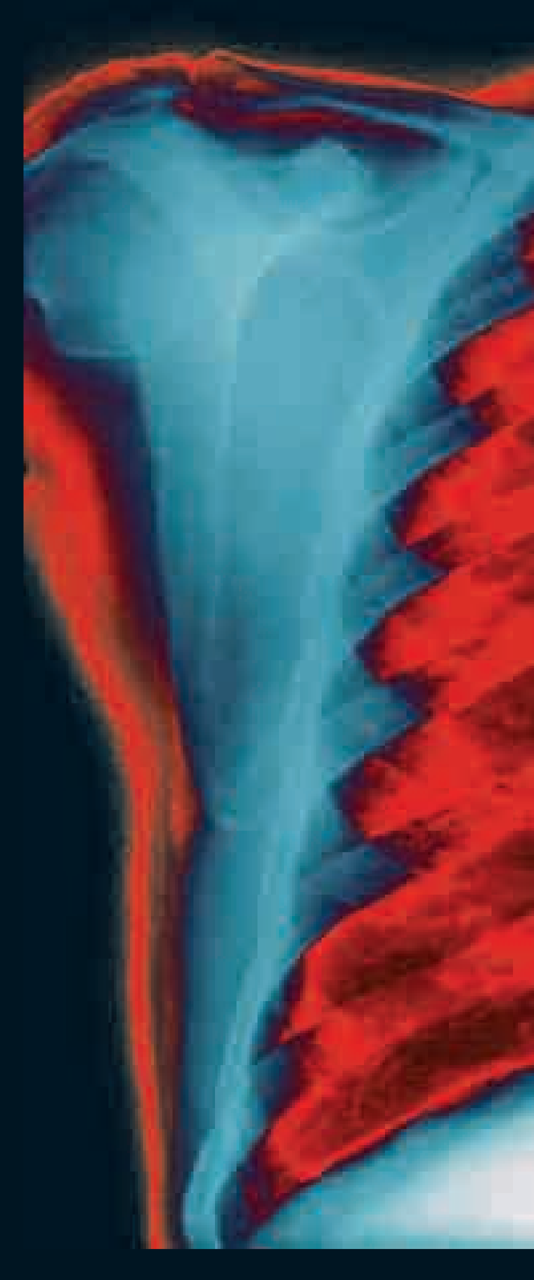
Gym supervisor Adrian Bonner isn't totally convinced of the game's merits though he recognises the benefits that the game could have for non-active gamers. "I can see how this could generate an interest in physical fitness", he says. "The younger generation is becoming increasingly unhealthy – perhaps this could be a stepping stone to other forms of exercise, such as dance." He goes on to admit that, although he doesn't have personal experience of the game, he feels it's something that should perhaps be combined with other kinds of exercise to maintain a healthy balance.

Those gamers reluctant to try 'other forms' of exercise that aren't game-related may be interested in the next big thing in home fitness. Earlier this year an American company called Cycle FX released a gaming peripheral called the GameRider. Similar in design to a regular exercise bike, the GameRider connects to a PSone or PS2 – the faster you pedal, the faster the in-game action. The system is potentially compatible with all kinds of games, though racing and driving (particularly those featuring bikes) are obviously the most suitable.

Not to be outdone by the GameRider, Reebok has just released a similar product called the Reebok CyberRider in the UK. This workout add-on is compatible with PSone, PS2 and PC and comes with a list of recommended games including *Burnout*, *Colin McRae Rally*, *Tony Hawk's* and *Downhill Mountain Biking*.

Amanda Giddens of the Reebok Fitness Academy believes that part of the attraction of the product is that people can exercise without even realising it. "Our trials show that riders exercise for longer as they become engrossed in the gameplay," she said. "Riders have commented that time flies whilst they train and they enjoy the interactive nature of the bike."

Away from the home, a number of gyms have already taken stock of exercise bikes that chart your speed in the form of a *Space Invaders*-style interface – the faster you cycle, the more your ship shoots. Responses suggest that the system is popular with gym-goers, though so far the machine is not widespread. Of course, if the CyberRider does catch on, this could be the beginning of something much larger. There are so many exercise machines that could be linked with videogames – just imagine a cross-country skiing machine, or perhaps a special version of *Crash Bandicoot* that can be linked to a treadmill. We've already seen arcade machines that let you ride horses, paddle canoes or kick footballs, but these new machines would undoubtedly raise the fitness levels of those playing, while being a great form of entertainment at the same time.



YIN AND YANG

So videogames may be beneficial to your physical health (assuming you don't overdo it), but could they also improve your mental fitness? For years games have been made the scapegoat for causing violence and increased aggression in children but are there really any firm details backing up this side of the argument? It may be true that people who commit anti-social acts also regularly play videogames, but the vast majority of gamers don't turn to crime after a quick go on *The Getaway* or *GTA: Vice City*.

"EXCESSIVE ANYTHING CAN BE HARMFUL"

"PLAYERS MADE A CLEAR DISTINCTION BETWEEN REAL-LIFE VIOLENCE AND VIRTUAL VIOLENCE"

From the early Nineties onwards, research has been carried out into the effects of violent games, but has yet to find any real proof that they can drive people to commit crime or act violently. Some findings suggested that children who played violent games (or watched violent video footage) demonstrated more aggression than those who didn't, but it's quite likely that the aggression shown was mostly down to the body releasing adrenaline during play, rather than any direct effects on the mind. The body produces adrenaline to give it a boost of energy when stressed, under attack or when enduring any sort of physical activity. Professor Talmadge Wright of Loyola University, Chicago, has studied the social aspects of online gaming, particularly FPSs such as *Counter Strike*, and believes that the temporary excitement of the game could be misconstrued as aggression.

"Players made a clear distinction between real-life violence and virtual violence," he says. "The only aggression one could point to is the excitement generated by the game and the teamwork involved – the same kind of excitement one would expect between football players."

Another effect of adrenaline is that it can numb the senses when the body is in pain, and recent investigations have been finding out whether videogames could provide pain relief for hospital patients – specifically children with chronic illnesses or undergoing long courses of treatment. Tests carried out at Jesuit University, West Virginia, showed that children who played videogames showed an increased level of tolerance towards pain, but no significant increase in aggression or competitiveness. Of course, the games also act as a valuable distraction for ill youngsters – something Gavin Cleary has witnessed first-hand. "I believe computer games have many positive attributes, and are regularly played by children in the hospital I work in," he says. "Not just post-operatively but at many other times to help distract the child from his or her particular medical problem." This theory is supported by professor Mark Griffiths of Nottingham Trent University psychology department. "This method of pain relief is already being used with burns victims, and particularly injured hands," he says. "Physiotherapy is never a nice thing, but patients can play videogames to exercise their hands without noticing the pain."

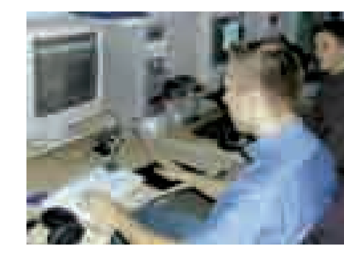
SOCIAL CLIMBING

Far from the image of a lone gamer skulking behind a monitor in a darkened room, videogaming can help promote vigorous social intercourse. How? Here's how:

MULTIPLAYER MODES: ZELDA: FOUR SWORDS
Most games present the option of playing with or against friends on the same console or via link-up play. This can encourage either healthy competition or close co-operation.

DISCUSSION: www.totalgames.net (for instance…)
Talking about games is almost as popular as playing them, and many gamers join forums and chatrooms in order to discuss videogames, game culture or just about anything you'd cover in a 'normal' conversation.

ONLINE GAMING:
Online gaming lets you play against friends who don't live locally or even meet people you didn't know before. Team games require trust and many in-game conversations show humour and good-natured banter.



TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING?

Unfortunately, the adrenaline theory is also fuelling the argument that videogames are addictive and therefore bad for your health. It's possible to become hooked on the effects that chemical messengers have on the senses, rather like if you were to become addicted to recreational drugs. Griffiths (whose specialist subject is gambling addiction) points out that "addiction is caused by a genetic disorder". He goes on to say that "some people have slight differences with their DRD2 gene and this can cause them to become addicted to things that raise their Dopamine levels." Dopamine is a neurotransmitter (a chemical messenger like adrenaline) that affects the brain processes that control emotional response and the ability to experience pleasure and pain. Dopamine levels are increased after a pleasurable event (such as completing a tricky level in a game, for instance), in turn making gamers feel happier and thus becoming addicted. Unfortunately, the research into the DRD2 gene and the effects that Dopamine has on the body hasn't yet been tested with videogames, though it's suspected that it will show similar results to tests on other potentially addictive pastimes.

Fears that gaming is addictive lead to accusations that it's an anti-social pastime practised by people who'd rather mooch around in *Final Fantasy* lands or the Mushroom Kingdom than engage in 'normal' social activities. Yet the research carried out so far into the social effects of gaming seems to show that, far from being loners, gamers form strong social networks. Professor Wright studied online gaming on a college campus and found that it was a useful tool for building friendships. "It provided a way to make friends across interests and departments, with gaming as the tie that binds," he says. However, Wright's findings also showed that people would rather play against friends than strangers. "Friends getting together to play with other friends in the same room seems to be the preferred form," he says. "Many online players we have observed often live near each other. They may go online to communicate and then get together later in the same neighbourhood. On a public server where you don't know someone, trust becomes a more immediate problem. However, even in that case, over time you can get to know someone and that can lead to outside email exchanges. Usually though, most people refer to each other by their tag names and don't go any further."

Wright says that these public server groups consist of acquaintances rather than friendships, though it can be hard to gauge if someone's 'real' social life is suffering because of their 'virtual' friends. "Most [gamers] develop little methods to make sure they balance their gaming time with other needed social activities," he says. "This may be harder for younger players who have more free time. For older players, other interests and responsibilities compete for their time and they make adjustments accordingly." Finding the time to do everything is clearly important, although gaming may play a crucial role in making sure the pressures of the world don't mount up. Wright says that gaming allows players to "shut off certain parts of their brains and emphasise others" and points out that the high degree of stimulation provided by a game is very attractive for people who "think for a living". "I think it is no accident that the people we interviewed were all top in their class, highly intellectual and very disciplined in both playing and in their school work," he says. So is it possible that there's a correlation between intelligence and gaming? Could games even stimulate learning?

TOO COOL FOR SCHOOL?

One of the reasons why videogames are given such bad press and why parents often disapprove of children playing them (and perhaps why adults who play games are perceived as childish) is because they appear to serve no useful function – a view with which David Deutsch, an eminent physicist and keen supporter of the Taking Children Seriously organisation, does not agree. "Unfortunately, taking too narrow a view of the nature of human learning causes one to stigmatise almost anything that is engaging but falls outside the largely accidental category of 'education'," he says. "If music were invented today, it would be deemed similarly pointless and damaging because it is hard to express the reasons for playing music in terms of values independent of music." The fact is, games are increasingly recognised as being 'useful'.

The puzzle-solving, strategic thinking and quick reactions needed to play some videogames are now being harnessed for use in the classroom and elsewhere. Last year, Teachers Evaluating Educational Multimedia (TEEM) – an organisation that assesses software and advises teachers on how it can be used in schools – announced that games such as *The Sims*, *Sim City* and *Championship Manager* could be used as teaching aids. Its report said that skills such as planning and strategic thinking as well as numeracy, reading and spelling could be learnt by playing these games at school. However, TEEM's Communications Manager, Nick Austin, points out that videogames should include content that can be applied to real life for the game to be classed as educational. "The underlying theories to the games have to have consistency," he says. "For example, children won't learn about how a Formula 1 racing car handles unless the computer version obeys the

"A LITTLE OF WHAT YOU FANCY DOES YOU GOOD"



laws of physics and is based on sound engineering." So it looks like Electronic Arts is out of luck then…

Even though the educational value of some games is questionable, the response from teachers towards videogames in education has been very positive. "I've just been talking to a City Learning Centre manager who is very keen to use games as part of a session with parents and children," says Austin. Despite working in education though, Austin also suggests that even games that could be classed as non-educational aren't really bad for children, though he feels that playing them is an activity that should be done in moderation. "Excessive anything can be harmful," he says. "Good teachers and parents know this and make sure that gaming is only part of the diet, not all of it. I'd be equally concerned if a child did nothing but play football all day or read the novels of Charles Dickens 24/7."

So it appears that games with fact-based content may actually be suitable tools for learning, but it isn't just 'edutainment' titles that have been argued as being good for your metal and physical health. As a counterpoint to the Nineties studies into whether violent games were harmful, it was argued that videogames were beneficial, particularly when it came to improving hand-eye co-ordination. It's a theory that makes sense too – *Tetris*, for example, is easily comparable to shape sorter toys that are given to toddlers, while any game that uses a keyboard is likely to improve typing skills. There have even been claims that people employed in jobs that require quick reactions and good co-ordination, such as airline or fighter pilots, perform better if they regularly play videogames. However, Christopher Hodgkinson, technical director at the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators (GAPAN) suggests that playing videogames may not be that helpful. "Experienced service pilots who take co-ordination tests usually score highly as they have honed their psychomotor skills over the years by virtue of the job they do," he says. "In theory, it may be thought possible for an individual to achieve similar advantage by playing computer games with high co-ordination content or by practising with flight simulation software programs. However, research conducted with some 5,000 RAF candidates for aircrew selection indicated that there appeared to be only an insignificant correlation in the results of those who had significant computer experience compared to those who did not." It's hardly concrete evidence that games can improve co-ordination, but the fact that the RAF have researched this area shows that it's being seriously considered.

ALL IN THE NAME OF FUN

Things have already come a long way from the 'videogames rot your brain' view that most non-gamers seemed to hold 15 years ago (and which many still have). Their intellectual content has been proven to help develop young minds (and keep older ones active) while titles such as *Samba De Amigo* and *Dancing Stage* offer a surprising alternative to fitness videos and aerobics classes. And while the educational and fitness benefits of playing such games are still open for discussion, there's currently very little to prove that regular videogames are bad for you either. All activities carry a certain amount of risk (in the year 2000, over 800 people in the UK were admitted to hospital after accidents involving sponges or loofahs, for instance) and there will always be scare stories.

If you enjoy playing games and you eat well and do plenty of exercise, you're likely to be a healthier person purely from the happiness that gaming brings – especially if your friends enjoy the pastime too. There's an old song that goes "a little of what you fancy does you good". How true – especially when it comes to playing videogames.

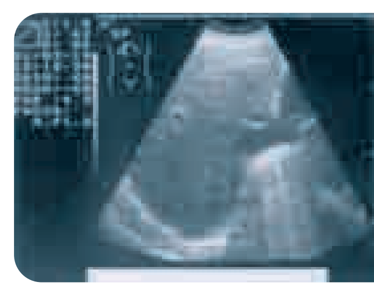


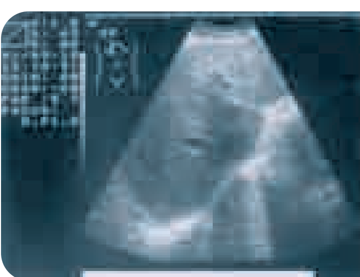


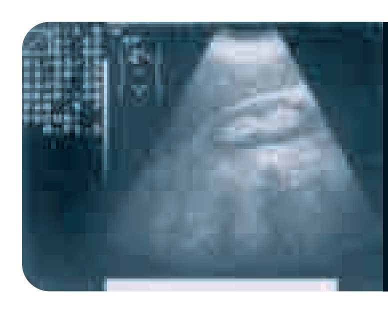
Obesity • Auditory hallucinations • Repetitive strain injury • Deep vein thrombosis • Motion sickness • Addiction • Calluses • Poor eyesight • Triggering epilepsy • Bruising • Sprains • Dehydration • Cramps • Headaches • Tendonitis • Back strains

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Don't play for extended periods
- Take a 10-minute break every hour you play
- Play in a well-lit room and sit back from the screen
- Change your sitting position regularly
- Avoid fatty or sugary gaming snacks such as crisps, biscuits or carbonated drinks
- Stop playing immediately if you feel dizzy, nauseous or develop a headache
- Go and get a bit of exercise in the fresh air – don't take your GBA with you
- Call your parents, they'd love to hear from you








Does Virtua Fighter 4 Evolution
have enough new features to justify
its release, or is it just a cash-in?
Find out what we think on page 122

New moves, new weapons, new characters… there's plenty to keep you busy in the new *Virtua Fighter* title. You can even change your fighter's outfits, Trinny and Susannah be damned.

REVIEWS

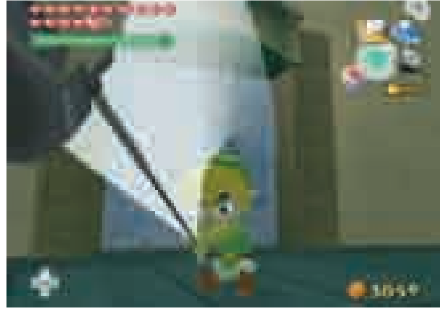


THE AVERAGE

Despite representing an industry in which high scores mean everything, **games™** is not a magazine that marks with the majority. A lot of people think that anything below 7 (7.0, 70%, whatever) is a bad score – we don't. Going on a scale of one to ten, five is the average – average being a game that does what it sets out to do without attempting to do it better than anyone else. If a game gets five, you'll get some enjoyment out of it but nothing more, simple as that. What's more, we won't be swayed by PR people telling us what a game's like – we only decide once we've played each game to death and, in the majority of cases, to completion. If a game's bad, we'll make sure you know; if it's great, we'll sing its praises. At the end of the day, we're just here to help you decide what's worth your hard-earned cash. After all, if it wasn't for you, we'd be out of a job.



Link's Deku Leaf lets him glide via the magic of, er, magic.



Ignore the structural and physical impossibilities for a moment and just enjoy the horribly oversized Skull Hammer in all its megaton glory.





FINGERPRINT

games™

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

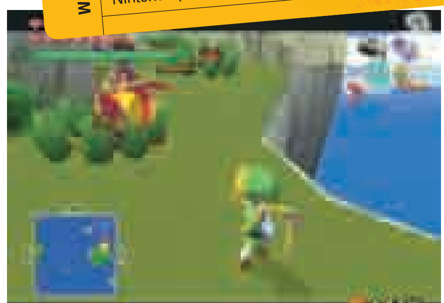
ELEMENTAL: Need to get somewhere in a hurry? Conjure up a tailwind to speed up your journey.

COLOURFUL: With the unique visual style, Nintendo proves that less can be more…

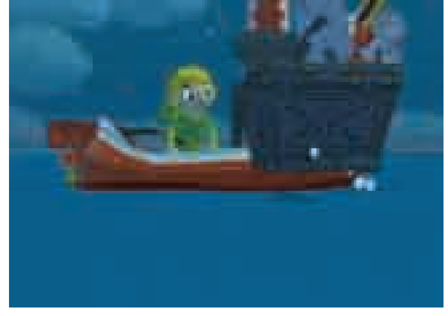
Familiar enemies, groovy new paint jobs. Rest assured that these ghostly hands and their obsession with escorting you out of dungeons is as annoying as ever.



Each foe has its own weakness, but in the case of these guys, you may have to do a little undressing to find it…



Since it lets you target numerous items at once, the Boomerang is a surprisingly useful tool. And it comes back, too.



The many treasures of the deep come in these sturdy containers which, thankfully, don't seem to be lockable. Those pirates are a trusting bunch.



No, it's not a sniper rifle – it's Link's trusty nautical telescope. Come to think of it, a sniper rifle would be sort of useful though…





THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER

LINK HAS HIS WORK CUT OUT THIS TIME – SAVING THE WORLD AND THE GAMECUBE? GOOD LUCK, YOUNG HERO…



FORMAT REVIEWED
GameCube

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Nintendo

DEVELOPER
In-House

PRICE
£39.99

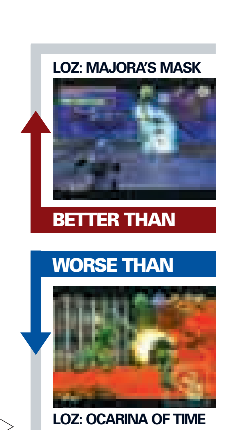
RELEASE
3 May (Japan/US: Out Now)

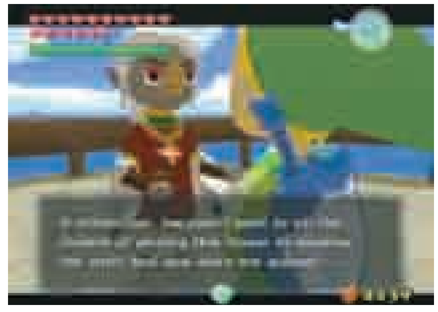
PLAYERS
1

If you were to entrust the fate of a console to a single videogame character, who would it be? Sonic's Dreamcast adventures couldn't save the failing machine and Mario's next offering won't be with us for a while. So all eyes fall on the green-clad, pointy-eared fellow looking bashful in the corner. Could he be the saviour of the system created to house him? In his first starring GameCube role, the pressure is on young Link to excel himself and treat the world to the much-anticipated sequel to his N64 double bill. By harnessing the power of the wind, Link acquires a host of new moves, abilities and equipment with which to conquer the evil that summoned him in the first place (as the legend tells) but will it be enough to sell GameCubes? Quite frankly, yes…

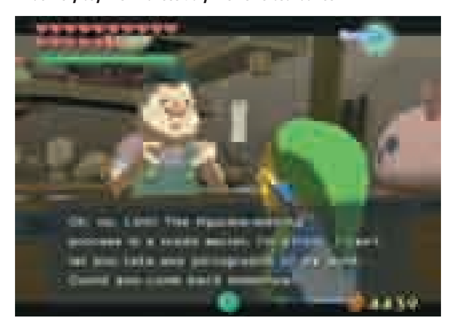
Far from being a catastrophic error, the bold cel-shaded look of the game may have saved the series. How? Two words – *Majora's Mask*. By no means a bad game, *Majora's Mask* was far less successful than the mighty *Ocarina Of Time*, probably because most people saw it not as a sequel but an update to the N64 classic. Had the game differed stylistically from its forerunner, chances are *Majora's Mask* would have had more of an impact, but this aesthetic leap was saved for the first GameCube adventure. As good as screenshots can be, they can't even come close to showing just how astonishing the game really is in action. Throwing around depth of field and motion blur effects effortlessly, the action may be 30 frames per second but it remains rock solid – we'd much rather that than the attempted 60 fps with frequent dropouts that seem so common today.

Anyone who refuses to play this game on the grounds of its simplistic and 'childish' appearance is shooting themselves in the foot – doing so would be as foolish as passing up *Pokémon* or *Harvest Moon* simply because of their 'kiddy' reputation. Beneath the deceptive simplicity lies a level of detail seldom seen in modern gaming, encompassing astonishing animation (it's not often that tassels and hair are coded to fall on and around surfaces rather than glitching through them), incredible use of lighting and countless





The legendary hero swallows his pride and takes on the role of a delivery boy. His kindness truly knows no boundaries.



GOTTA SCULPT 'EM ALL

Nintendo seems to like miniature versions of its creations – first there was the Model Lottery in *Super Smash Brothers Melee* and now there's a similar mode in *The Wind Waker*. The Nintendo Figurine Gallery is a side quest during Link's adventure – you'll find it on a small island in the south-east of the Great Sea, run by a strange man who loves making models. Use the Picto Box to take pictures of anything that moves and this craftsman will turn it into a model for later viewing. Seeing as how there's space in the gallery for every character in the game, filling it could take a while…



TIMELINE HI-LIGHTS

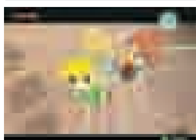
THE BEST BITS IN THE GAME AND WHEN YOU CAN EXPECT TO REACH THEM…

00:30 MINUTES



After seeing your sister kidnapped by a giant bird, you should be making your way to the Forsaken Fortress to mount a heroic rescue attempt. You can do it, little fella.

03:00 HOURS



By now, you should have reached the end of the first dungeon and started building up your collection of essential items, such as the all-important Grappling Hook.

5 DAYS



While you'll probably be coming close to the end of Link's quest, it's unlikely that you'll have managed to find everything there is to discover. You'll soon be back for more…



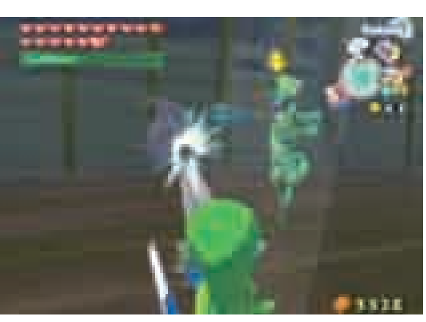
Sometimes the Wind Waker can be used for purposes other than elemental control, and the dungeons enjoy exploiting this fact.

"ANYONE WHO AVOIDS THIS GAME ON THE GROUNDS OF ITS 'CHILDISH' APPEARANCE IS SHOOTING THEMSELVES IN THE FOOT"

details that make Link's massive watery world a pleasure to explore. Exploration is definitely the key word here – while you could dramatically cut the length of the game by knowing where to go, you'd lose the enjoyment of discovering a new island, uncovering a secret cave or stumbling across buried treasure – all the elements that complement the main quest so well. The massive areas of the SNES and Game Boy titles and the expansive plains of Hyrule are matched, if not surpassed, by the rolling seas, deserted islands and huge dungeons of *The Wind Waker* – as you climb the village lookout tower and first use your telescope, you'll realise the epic scale of the game. After exploring a large island, you'll consult your map only to find that the huge land mass you just spent hours on isn't big enough to show up on the main map. The apparently endless sailing may not appeal to some, but there are (without wanting to spoil anything) several ways to avoid this.

As usual, Link amasses plenty of useful items but perhaps more impressive than the amount of gadgets are the ingenious ways in which they are used. The Grappling Hook, for instance, doubles as a thieving weapon in battle and a treasure-hunting crane at sea. This multi-purpose implementation is further exploited by the excellent boss encounters, many of which will require use of several of your tools at the same time to emerge victorious. These are some of the best parts of the game and, particularly with later enemies, weak points aren't as glaringly obvious as you may expect. The only slight criticism here would be that in some areas you'll often need access to more than the three items assigned to the face buttons, but as your inventory is only a button press away this isn't really grounds for concern.

From the user-friendly interface to the ambience created by the pairing of cleverly



Not content with his power over the wind, Link can also use light as a weapon against creatures of the night. He's clever like that.



Did you really sail all the way out here just to cut down that shrub? Quit messing around and make with the world-saving, you little scamp.



implemented music and the distinct graphical style, this is a *Zelda* utopia. Familiar items, characters and races keep the all-new antics of Link close to fans' hearts while still taking the series in a new direction. One of the points that is bound to be raised is an apparent lack of dungeons. Gone are the days when everything came in eights (well, sort of…) as there are now only five dungeons, most of which yield equipment for Link's sea quest rather than eight-part collectables. This is a refreshing change from the 'finish dungeon, go to next dungeon, repeat' affair that it could have turned into and, as such, you get a much greater feeling of involvement and accomplishment from unearthing your rewards.

For all its merits, we can't help feeling a bit short-changed by some parts of *Wind Waker*. The painstakingly slow boat trips often feel like their main aim is to bump up the game clock, and there are also a few moments when the game seems rather patronising – repeating important text and highlighting key words in red will ensure mass appeal but more experienced gamers may resent this hand-holding. We'd have liked to have seen an option to reduce this (like the cleverly worked hint system of *Metroid Prime*) but since cases of this are rare and don't really impede gameplay, we'll let Link off with a caution this time.

As is often the case with Nintendo's in-house developments, you'll need to complete the quest several times if you want to thoroughly complete the game. Some sub-quests – particularly the Figurine Gallery – will be impossible to finish in the space of a single adventure but, fortunately, Link doesn't suffer through repeated play. There are plenty of other side missions to keep you going once the main task is out of the way – from recovering the many sunken relics to trying your hand as a trader as you complete your map of the land, there's as much to do after the primary objective as there is during it. There's even solace to be found in just aimless sailing – there's something strangely therapeutic about taking to the waves and seeing where the wind takes you.

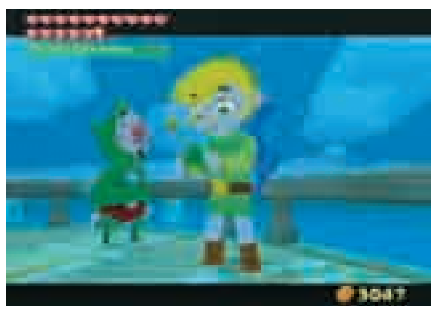
The Wind Waker is an excellent title both in its own right and as a continuation of one of Nintendo's most hallowed sagas. The wonderful balance of action, exploration and narrative makes for one of the finest adventures of the year and one of the best GameCube games to date. It's easy to pick out flaws in such an ambitious game, but they don't come close to overshadowing the overall package. Miyamoto-san has always stressed that this is all about the gameplay and he couldn't be more right. We could rant about the odd graphical glitch, moan about how the game should be longer or how cel-shading is evil, but nothing is going to alter the fact that *The Wind Waker* is a stunning piece of software. A little easy? Perhaps. A little short? Maybe. A fine testament to the GameCube's capabilities? Definitely. While it won't be universally adored, the only people we can see being disappointed with this are those who find themselves without a GameCube on 3 May.



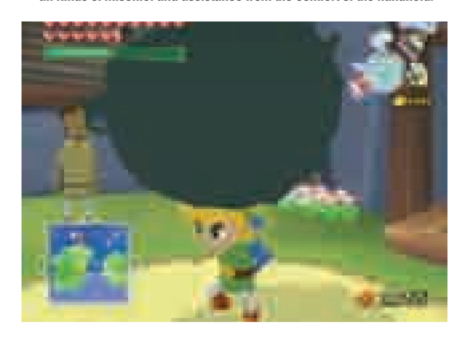
VERDICT 9/10
ANOTHER WORTHY ADDITION TO THE ZELDA LEGACY

KOOLO-LIMPAH

When Nintendo announced that *The Wind Waker* would use the GameCube/GBA link cable to enhance the gameplay, no-one was surprised – after all, it was a feature that Nintendo was keen to show off from day one. But when the Japanese version of the game arrived and we tried out the Tingle Tuner (the device that turned the GBA into a mini-radar with added functions), we felt it was more of a minor distraction rather than a necessity. In English though, we have to admit that it's more useful than you might expect. Having Tingle by your side as you explore dungeons and the overworld not only gives you hints about your surroundings, but also helps you uncover hidden treasures that otherwise wouldn't be available. It's almost like an entirely new section of the game that's waiting to be uncovered.



Link up a Game Boy Advance and a friend can control Tingle, initiating all kinds of mischief and assistance from the comfort of the handheld.



FAQs

Q. HOW LONG?
Although Miyamoto-san admitted that they had to drop three whole dungeons, the game is still pretty big – a first-time player could probably complete the game with just the basics in about 20 hours.

Q. MUCH TO DO?
With 49 different islands to visit across the Great Sea, there's plenty to see and do, especially if you take all the numerous side quests into account.

Q. BUT IT'S CEL-SHADED!
Yes, and the game is all the better for it. The graphical style that so many people criticised helps give Link and his surroundings more character than ever before. So there.



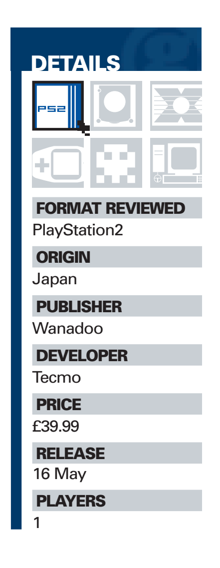
Given the Greek theme, it'd be rude for a Minotaur not to make an appearance – so here's one complete with horns, mad staring eyes and a damn great sword. Happy now?



The gold statues contain new moves and combos, so you'll want to break as many as possible. As ever, your trusty Diskarmor will do the trick.

IS THIS GREEK EXPEDITION GOOD ENOUGH TO DRIVE DANTE TO TEARS?

RYGAR: THE LEGENDARY



DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Wanadoo

DEVELOPER
Tecmo

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
16 May

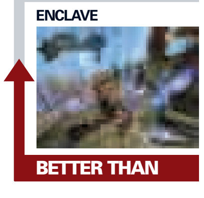
PLAYERS
1

Familiarity can be a wonderful marketing tool if used well. In the same way that licensed products usually sell on the name and heritage alone, updates of popular old games will also often catch the eye of the veteran gamer. Playing on your fond memories of what may or may not be a classic may seem like a bit of a low blow, but as long as it continues to work you can expect it to keep happening. The latest in the long line of catalogue-trawling re-workings sees arcade and NES hero Rygar undergo a change of scenery and image for the 21st Century. Wave goodbye to the barbaric, tribal trouser-wearing hero of yesteryear as we introduce you to the new Rygar in all his mythical Greek skirt-wearing glory.

"Its just *Devil May Cry* but a bit more Greek," you may cry, and you'd be pretty much right. Capcom created something sublime with Dante's first effort so it comes as no surprise when another developer attempts a similar formula. What is surprising is when the mimicry results in a similarly high quality product; an achievement that, unfortunately, *Rygar* can't quite manage. The shared elements become pretty noticeable early on when you discover that collecting orbs of Build Up Points can enhance your combat abilities. Even gripes with the camera in Capcom's gothic adventure still ring true in *Rygar* – since it uses a similar fixed camera scenario, the action is occasionally blocked by an object or character that can make it difficult to see what's going on. This is not a problem unique to *Rygar*, but this doesn't excuse it or make it any less infuriating when you're hit by something you never even knew was there.

Tecmo do seem to have a way of getting the best out of the consoles they work with – *Dead Or Alive 2* practically made the Dreamcast sweat, *Dead Or Alive 3* and *Xtreme Beach Volleyball* made Xbox owners very smug indeed, and with *Project Zero* and now *Rygar*, the PS2 has been given a workout the likes of which it seldom sees. Make no mistake, this is a very pretty game indeed

ENCLAVE

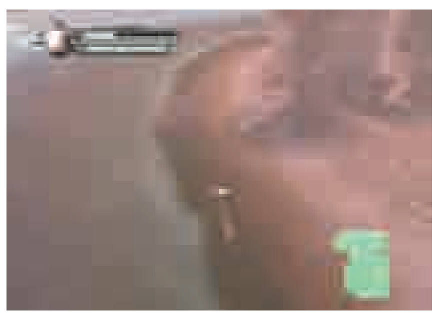


BETTER THAN

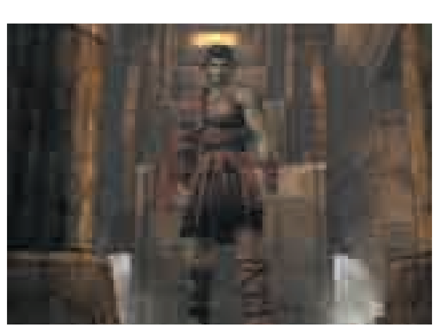
WORSE THAN



DEVIL MAY CRY



It may not look it here, but the beach scene in motion is simply beautiful. In fact, you might just want to stay…



The main character model is gloriously detailed and well animated to boot. Not bad looking either, if that's your thing.

FAQs

Q. HOW LONG?
Not very, but while you can finish it in well under ten hours, there's lots to find second time around.

Q. HOW MANY WEAPONS?
You'll find three regular Diskarmors fairly early on, with an extra one for finishing the game.

Q. BEST BIT?
Definitely the bosses. Challenging, imaginative and enjoyable, if only it could all have been this good…

FINGERPRINT

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

IMPROVISE: By using your Diskarmor as a sort of grappling hook, you can use enemies as weapons.

MYTHICAL: The settings, enemies and bosses create an unmistakeable Ancient Greek atmosphere.

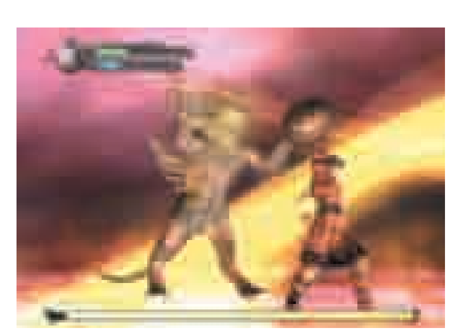
SPINNING AROUND

What sort of hero goes into battle armed only with the world's biggest yo-yo? A clever one, Tecmo would have you believe… Rygar's Diskarmor is one of the most unlikely weapons we've seen but it certainly seems to do the trick. Smashing through walls and enemies alike, Rygar is capable of some stunning combo attacks with the leashed disc blade. Ivy from *Soul Calibur*'s repertoire springs to mind on more than a few occasions as our hero flicks enemies skywards and rudely slams them back down to earth. Better still, the shoulder buttons cause him to raise the disc and use it as a shield to avoid or at least minimise damage. Later on, Rygar is even capable of using this ranged weapon as a primitive grappling hook; this aspect is a little limited but it's nice to see the Diskarmor getting used for more than just beating countless enemies to a pulp.

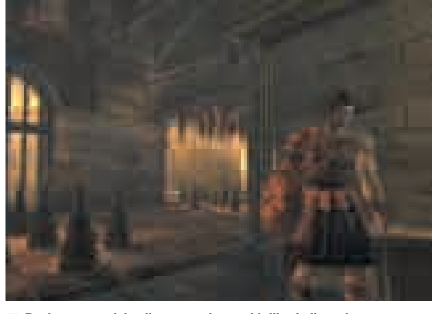


Rygar gives the PS2 a good workout, with some fantastic graphics using the machine's full capabilities.

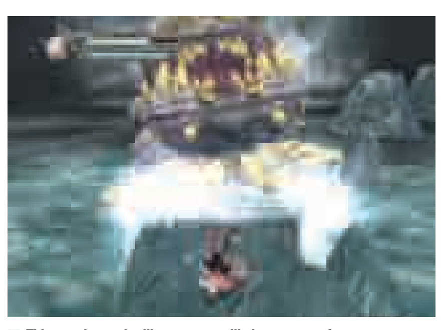
ADVENTURE



Final Fantasy, eat your heart out – each Diskarmor can summon its imbued spirit, which is a very nice touch.



Booby traps and deadly contraptions… it's like *Indiana Jones* never happened. Although he might not have looked so good in a skirt.



This massive snake-like creature will give you a run for your money – start wielding your big metal yo-yo like a man possessed.

and even the orchestral soundtrack is, in places, very special. The somewhat erratic nature of the sound can be slightly worrying though, and while certain themes and the crisp effects carry out their duties with aplomb, other less memorable tracks and the dire voice acting (which makes *Resident Evil*'s voiceover work look Oscar-worthy) do little to further the game's appeal. In all fairness, this takes little away from the stunning look of the game (in terms of PlayStation2 hardware, at least) but however small they may be, these elements do detract from the overall experience.

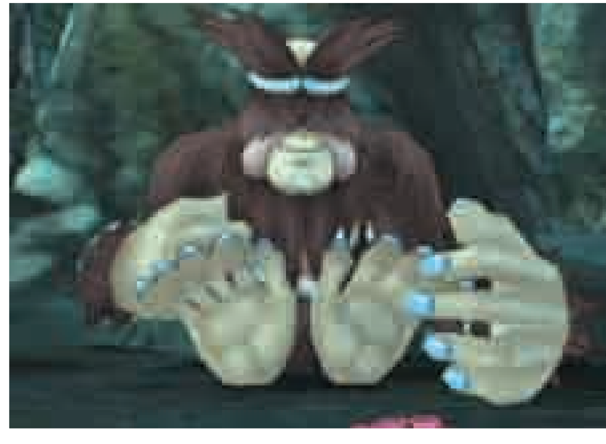
It'll probably come as no great surprise to hear that there's little variety in the tasks you're asked to perform. Swinging your Diskarmor around like a madman dispatches foes and smashes scenery easily, and while there may be a fistful of new moves to be learned, all of these serve a sole purpose. Other than single use, you'll have no need to slide, tackle or grapple elsewhere, nor will it be in any way beneficial for you to do so. This is a real shame, since controlling Rygar is so simple and such a joy that you really will want to link slides and swings into general combos. But you can't. If nothing else, there's a fair variety displayed by the locations that you'll visit, but when it comes down to it, a flashy backdrop can't hide the fact that the majority of your time will be spent flinging around an oversized yo-yo at groups, sometimes hordes, of identical enemies. The over-the-top boss battles bring some kind of diversity to the proceedings but if variety is the spice of life, *Rygar* left us feeling distinctly unseasoned…

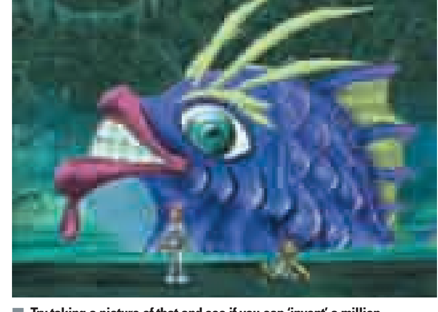
While not really ever troubling the major league, *Rygar* is a solid title that hints at bigger and better things to come. Tecmo is most likely to be associated with the *Dead Or Alive* series but if the potential shown here can be built on in *Ninja Gaiden* and subsequent titles, it'll continue to excel and expand. Plagued by the same camera and repetitiveness issues that mar 90 percent of games of this ilk (*Shinobi*, *Devil May Cry* and the *Resident Evil* series all suffer to varying extents), *Rygar* almost has the style of a real giant-killer but unfortunately never really matches this in terms of content. It's a crying shame too, but as we've said, hopes are now higher than ever for *Ninja Gaiden*. With the more powerful Xbox hardware to work with (which we already know they can exploit… Tina and Kasumi, take an excessively revealing bow) and some experience in the genre, all eyes are on Tecmo's next offering to be an unexpected classic – something that *Rygar* so badly wants to be but can't quite manage.

VERDICT 7/10

AN ENJOYABLE ADVENTURE BUT NOT QUITE ESSENTIAL







Try taking a picture of that and see if you can 'invent' a million fishfingers with it. Actually, no. That's a silly idea…

DARK CLOUD 2

SO MUCH TO DO, SO MUCH TO SEE, ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD TO DO IT

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Sony

DEVELOPER
Level 5

PRICE
£49.99 (US Import)

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1

Some games go down a risky road and revolve around a single unique feature. Be it 'incredible' slow motion effects or 'groundbreaking' battle systems, such titles will often rest on their laurels after showcasing just one trick – a potentially disastrous move should the key feature not impress. This worry can, of course, be alleviated through the incorporation of several such features, but does that always work? Level 5's *Dark Cloud 2*, a sequel to 2001's respectable RPG effort, is bursting with innovative elements, many of which could almost work as standalone games. And you know what? They *do* impress. Very much.

From start to finish, *Dark Cloud 2* treads a fine line between engrossing and complicated, but thankfully, it's more the former. RPG newbies take note – this will drop you in at the deep end. While none of the independent elements are especially confusing, the combination of weapon maintenance, defeating enemies, rebuilding towns, creating inventions and performing sub-quests (to name a few) can often be a little daunting. Strangely, whether the final product benefits or suffers from the wealth of activities on offer can be argued either way. Yes, many of them are little more than distractions. Sure, there's no real need to confuse matters with unnecessary tasks. But what you have to remember is that many of these activities are optional – you only need to invent a few items and catch a few fish to get to the end of the game and you're encouraged to indulge yourself, but when it's beneficial to your progress (and so enjoyable) why would you not want to?

The look and feel of the game will no doubt also provoke mixed reactions. While it may be

DARK CLOUD

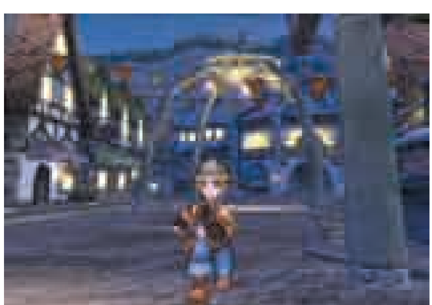


BETTER THAN

AS GOOD AS...



VAGRANT STORY



You can't stay for the carnival – there's work to be done.



Monica is a fully playable (and very useful) character.

FAQs

Q. RANDOM DUNGEONS?
Half and half. Some of the floors are preset while others retain the random placements seen in the last game.

Q. HOW MANY CHARACTERS?
Just the two, although both have 'alter egos' of sorts and you can take a support character with you too.

Q. HOW LONG?
Between inventing, fishing, upgrading and the small matter of the main quest, you're looking at upwards of 50 hours of glorious gameplay. Double that and you may be close to seeing everything.



This huge contraption helps you out early on by working its landscaping magic with the Geostones you find.

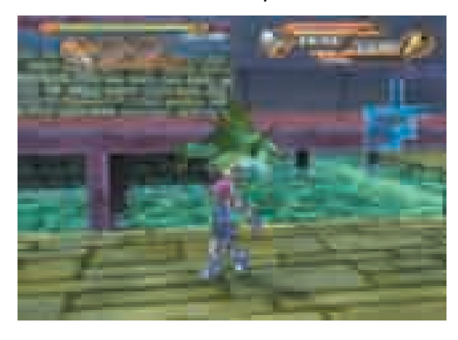
games™ FINGERPRINT

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

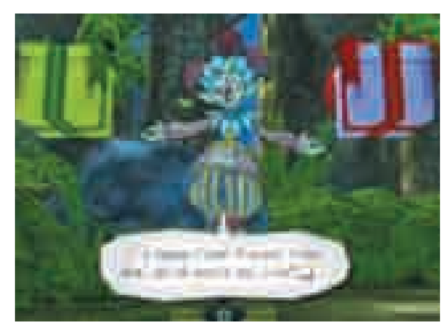
CREATION: The inventing system is among the most imaginative and distracting features in any recent game.

PRETTY: The graphical style produces some of the best PlayStation2 visuals to date.

Throwing enemies doesn't harm them unless they hit another foe, in which case all involved are momentarily stunned.



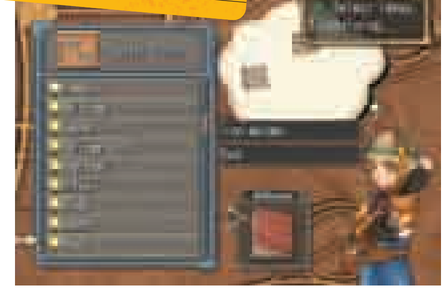
This self-proclaimed Happy Clown hides in chests, waiting to give you gifts. What a guy. Albeit a rather sinister one.



a little busier than many similarly styled titles, it certainly doesn't suffer for it. The sumptuous visuals are well complemented by an accomplished score (which does repeat itself a little between dungeon floors) and some excellent voice acting – it's hard not to be impressed by the game on an aesthetic level. Even animation hasn't been left to chance, running smoothly and at a solid rate. But it's the attention to detail that really earns *Dark Cloud 2* a place in our hearts. Day turns to night with all the expected results, people pose for photographs when you put them in the frame… so many little nuances litter the game world that you have to give credit to Level 5 for creating a believable and involving setting.

Unfortunately, *Dark Cloud 2* can be a victim of its own beauty at times. In certain areas, a few invisible boundaries shatter the mood as you try to throw an enemy into a lake only to have them bounce off something that isn't there. Other times, taking photographs can be slightly erratic and it's not always possible to snap obvious objects (one set of curtains will register while others may not, annoyingly) but if this is the extent of our criticism then you can be sure that there's very little (if anything) seriously wrong with the core game. Save for minor gripes with the amount of re-treading old ground that is required to enhance weapons and earn Medals, there really is little to criticise. The endless dungeon trawling of the first game is all but gone and any lengthy sessions of slaying can easily be broken up with a spot of fishing, a flash of inspirational invention or even a relaxing game of Spheda – a golf-based mini-game that's eaten up a few more hours than we'd like.

The culmination of these varied elements is in an intense gaming experience that sits firmly at the top of its class as not only one of the best PS2 RPGs but also one of the best games of this generation. *Dark Cloud 2* is bound to have its critics – if only due to the sheer scale of the task at hand and the mixture of ways in which it can be tackled – but when each of the individual aspects has been implemented in such an impressive manner, it's hard to fault. By improving on the best bits of the first game, Level 5 has come up with a dazzling example of a dwindling genre. A true sequel should improve on its predecessor while acknowledging its roots – and this is one of the best true sequels we've seen in a long time. Sequel developers and RPG designers alike take note; this is how it's done on both accounts.



THE THINKER

Necessity, as they say, is the mother of invention; so rather than search through dungeons for something you need, why not just make it? Shortly after the game begins, Max is given a camera with which to take snapshots of anything he feels could inspire him to create the next 'sliced bread'. Once you've snapped all the elements you want to combine, a simple menu allows you to attempt your combination – if you're close to a breakthrough, you'll be given hints on how to finish your creation. Once the thinking part is done, you move onto the hard labour – you need to round up all the raw materials before you can realise your creative dreams. While not quite perfect, this is a wonderful inclusion that'll keep you inventing for the length of the game. If it weren't quite so distracting, we'd have finished the game a whole lot sooner…



Max's Ridepod needs constant maintenance, but by inventing new components you can keep improving it.



Gone is the annoyingly small carrying capacity – you've got a huge bag to fill with goodies this time.

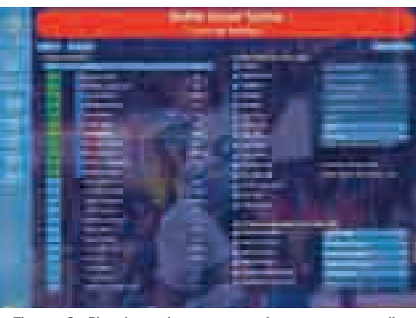


VERDICT 9/10

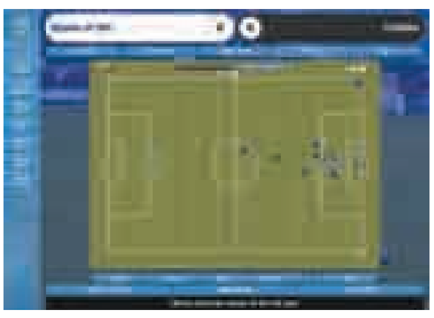
ONE OF THE FINEST RPGS ON THE PS2



Sit back and reap the rewards of your hard work as those hours of tactical fine-tuning finally start to pay off. Okay, so the match footage is rather stylised, but you can create more authenticity by wearing a sheepskin coat, an ostentatious watch and a flat cap (optional).



The new Set Piece instructions are a great chance to exert some direct influence over proceedings.



Study the highlights of previous matches to pinpoint any adjustments that need to be made.

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PC

ORIGIN
UK

PUBLISHER
Eidos

DEVELOPER
Sports Interactive

PRICE
£34.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1-16

MINIMUM SPECS
600 MHz processor, 64 MB RAM, 300 MB free hard disk space, 16 MB video card

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 4

BACK OF THE NET! SPORTS INTERACTIVE PULLS OFF A LATE WINNER…

It's been something of a delayed kick-off for *Championship Manager 4* and the much anticipated unveiling of its flagship 2D match engine. More than two years have passed since Eidos first announced that this groundbreaking instalment to the series would provide footy fans with the most involving and realistic management simulation the world has ever seen. And on the basis of *Champ Manager*'s undisputed domination of the genre for the last ten years, who were we not to believe every word?

As the last couple of season updates to the *CM3* engine added only a light sprinkling of new features to an already polished concept, the decision to completely rebuild *CM4* from the ground up was met with a mixture of excitement and reservation from hard-core fans. With expectations reaching fever pitch, could *CM4* really improve on the winning formula of its predecessors? Or would the magic of the series be lost completely if the promised transfer of match action from our imaginations onto our computer screens was anything but seamless? To begin with there are several quality features making their debut in *CM4*'s revamped line-up other than just the much-hyped 2D graphics engine.

Some major enhancements can be found in the range of instructions that can be issued to individual players, particularly in the previously overlooked area of set pieces. Recognising free kicks, corners and even throw-ins as potential goal-scoring opportunities a manager should be able to tactically influence, your players can now be allocated specific roles to undertake in dead ball situations. Should your side be awarded a direct free kick in Beckham territory you can have one player disrupting the opposition wall, while another performs the schoolboy trick of running over the ball before the actual taker dispatches it into the top corner. Hopefully.

A whole host of other commands can be issued to exert control over just about everything a player does on the pitch, such as where they should be attempting to cross the ball from and at which post or target man they should be aiming. Training options have also been given

FAQs

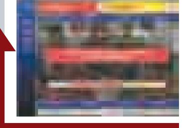
Q. IS WOODGATE AT NEWCASTLE?
Yup. Squads and statistics are bang up to date and include all the changes made in this year's transfer window.

Q. JUST THE HIGHLIGHTS?
You can choose to watch key or extended highlights, take in the entire 90 minutes, or switch between these modes.

Q. WHERE TO START?
With over 39 national leagues, there's no shortage of teams to choose from.

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 01/02





BETTER THAN

JUST LIKE



THE REAL THING (ALMOST)

If your more troublesome characters start getting too big for their boots a good dressing down should make sure they know who's the guv'nor.

new depth with a completely definable weekly schedule, allowing you to move Tuesday afternoon's session of 'pig in the middle' to Thursday morning if you feel it will help the team's title challenge.

Then there's the new 2D match engine. To the untrained eye it might not look much, but this is a truly revolutionary system. Okay, so just about every footy management sim that has come and gone over the past few years has incorporated a graphical match engine, promising us an accurate representation of our tactical decisions in glorious 3D action. Unfortunately, every single one we've played has ended up in the bin soon after discovering the intricate tactic we spent the last hour designing was largely unrelated to the action we were watching. So, like thousands of others, we always came back to *Champ Manager* where we could trust our tactical fine-tuning would have a true to life effect on the pitch.

And now, after a decade of having to imagine whether or not pushing our striker a couple of millimetres to the right on the tactics screen was actually responsible for an increase in goal attempts, we were overjoyed to find that *CM4* has indeed pulled off a graphical depiction of play that continues the series' celebrated quality of realism. The 2D engine works perfectly and runs in perfect tandem with the traditional text commentary that accompanies the action. Obviously, the added ability to study your team's shape and movement on the pitch provides a huge amount of extra information on which to base those tactical decisions, and completely changes the way you'll play the game.

gamesTM

ENHANCED

IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL

WATCH THE ACTION: Make team selections and tactical decisions based on match performance.

UP-TO-DATE: With scouts all over the world, every player and team statistic is current and accurate.

The with/without ball tactics screen, where seasoned campaigners will have spent much of their time adjusting the positions their players are to take up when the ball is in various segments of the pitch, no longer features in *CM4*'s fresh approach. Whilst this may cause uproar in the terraces from traditionalists, the advanced dimensions added to the game by the movement of opposition players and fluid match dynamics lets you base strategies on a whole new level of realism. Spending your hours and months scrutinising the match action for where problems and opportunities exist is infinitely more rewarding than the previously static approach to searching for that perfect tactic.

Hard-core fans may feel uprooted at first but will soon discover *CM4* to be a massive leap forwards for the series, and the more involving appeal can only widen the game's already huge fanbase. Of course, there will still be those who just can't see what all the fuss is about…

VERDICT 9/10
A WHOLE NEW BALL GAME



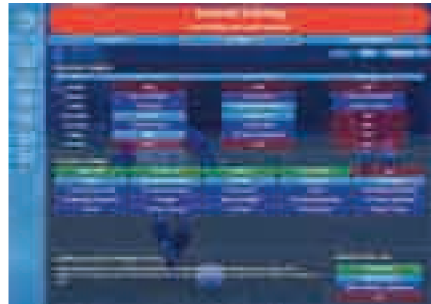
2D OR NOT 2D?

While the coloured dots that adorn *CM4*'s 2D match engine aren't going to win any awards for graphics, the system isn't without some clever little touches. Marvel as the paramedic dots rush to the aid of an injured player dot who, after receiving treatment, has to wait on the sidelines with the fourth official dot for permission to rejoin the game. Great stuff. Along with this tongue-in-cheek attention to detail, the incredibly intelligent engine depicts some joyfully realistic player movements. Your attackers will battle for space, timing their runs to beat the offside trap, while your defenders pick up runners and shut out the advances of the opposition. Monitoring the effectiveness of your tactics and player instructions can become so engrossing that you may find yourself watching more of the 90 minutes in real-time than you had planned…





The player likenesses may not be exactly uncanny, but their individual talents do show through.



You can now set your players customised weekly training schedules, but take care not to work them too hard before a big game.

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PC

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
Microsoft

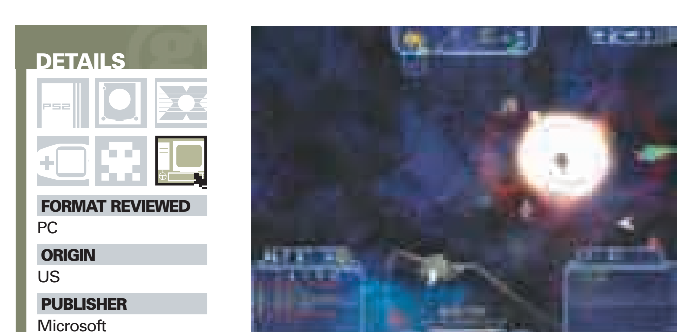
DEVELOPER
Digital Anvil

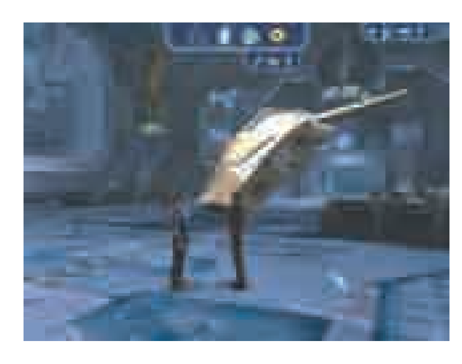
PRICE
£34.99

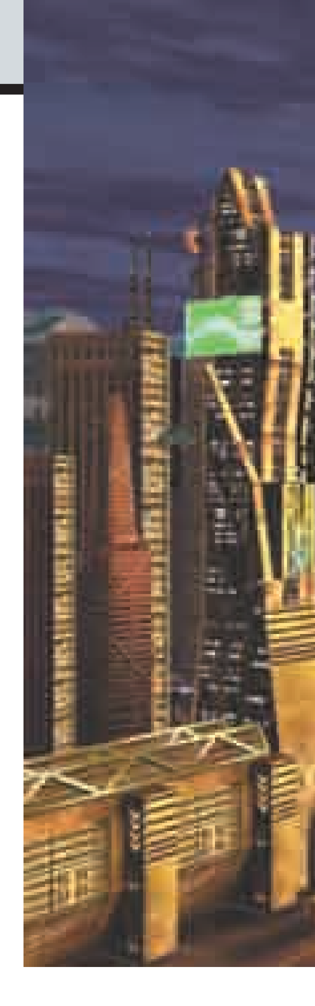
RELEASE
17 April

PLAYERS
1-multiplayer online

MINIMUM SPECS:
600 MHz processor, 128 MB RAM, 900 MB free hard disk space, 16 MB video card







WITH A GALAXY IN TURMOIL, THE SKY'S THE LIMIT FOR A TALENTED FIGHTER PILOT

FREELANCER

Freedom: the one word that really gets our mouths watering in anticipation of the latest groundbreaking step away from gaming linearity. So when Microsoft promised us open-ended adventuring by the bucket-load in the shape of *Freelancer*, the long-awaited sequel to intergalactic flight-fest *Starlancer*, we were understandably more than a little excited at the prospect of something special coming our way.

It's astonishing to think how the same concepts of boundless exploration and destiny control that make *Freelancer* such a milestone title were pioneered over a decade ago by the fantastic *Elite* series on the Amiga. Needless to say, things have moved on a bit since those days and developer Digital Anvil had a host of new fangled technology at its disposal with which to take a great idea to staggering new heights. After four years in the making, expectations were high as we strapped ourselves in and prepared for blastoff, determined to wring every drop of freeform gameplay from *Freelancer*'s vast universe of possibility.

Far from being a dark and lonely place, you'll arrive in outer space to find it's actually swarming with activity. Particularly around the major space stations and planetary hubs the airwaves are alive with giant cargo ships requesting clearance to dock, police fighters scanning your hull for contraband and even full-on raging battles. Observing the galaxy's inhabitants going about their daily business is quite a sight to behold and lends a real sense of interactivity to the stunningly rendered environments. You'll start off by undertaking a couple of straightforward tutorial missions to get a feel for the controls and offer a taster of the excellent combat system that will make up much of the gameplay to come. Blast your way through these and you'll be left to your own devices, giving you the perfect opportunity to fully explore the first of 48 massive star systems.

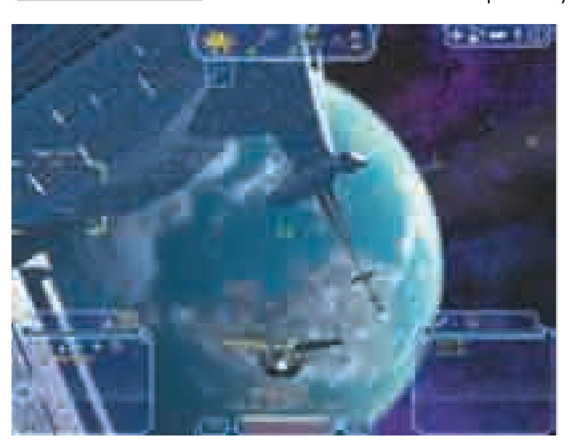
After a spot of sightseeing to improve your galactic geography, you'll most likely want to dock at one of the countless spaceports and figure out how you're going to get your hands on the cash needed to really progress in the game. This is

STARLANCER

BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN

FRONTIER: ELITE 2



Throughout the *Freelancer* universe, giant space stations and heavenly bodies have a suitably imposing presence.



Designated trade lanes are generally the safest and quickest ways of getting around the game's 48 vast star systems.

FAQs

Q. WHAT'S WITH THE NAMES?
Planets such as Manhattan and Maine are logically located in the New York System, which really helps in finding your way around.

Q. A UNIVERSE ON ONE DISK?
The game's vast environment is astounding, but remember how the *Elite* universe fitted on a single floppy?

Q. WHAT IF I GET KILLED?
With the intelligent autosave feature you'll never have to retrace your steps too far.



Launching to space is automated, so you don't get to soar among those impressive skylines.

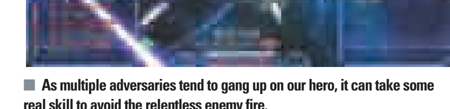
FINGERPRINT

gamesTM

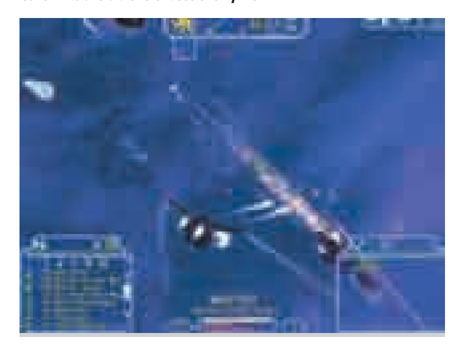
WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

CONTROL: Using the mouse cursor for movement and FPS-style targeting works like a dream.

CHOICE OF PATH: As your own boss, you can pick and choose the opportunities that take your fancy.



As multiple adversaries tend to gang up on our hero, it can take some real skill to avoid the relentless enemy fire.



Your foes can run but, with such excellent manoeuvrability at your fingertips, there's nowhere to hide.

where the decisions are made that will begin to determine the destiny of our opportunistic hero, Edison Trent. Whether to embark on a respectable career with the navy, speculate on the intergalactic commodity market as a deep space trader or look to make a fast buck from your talents within the criminal underworld is entirely up to you. Whilst docked, players are presented with the basic options of consulting the local job market, trading commodities, purchasing equipment to beef up your ship's capabilities or even upgrading to a completely new model of spacecraft. Although the camera follows Trent undertaking these activities, and interactions with the various dealers and potential employers are accompanied by short cut-scenes, the whole process is merely a graphical representation of the simple docking menus in *Elite*.

All of the actual gameplay takes place in outer space and essentially boils down to an entertaining series of dogfights amongst the stars. No matter whether you've chosen to undertake a combat mission for one of the game's warring parties, are protecting your own cargo from the designs of evil pirates or have decided to hijack a trade ship convoy yourself, the only skills you'll need to master are those of an accomplished star-fighter. Fortunately, this restriction is by no means a bad thing, considering the innovative combat interface has to be one of *Freelancer*'s major selling points. The intuitive command bars allow even the most amateur pilot to achieve just about anything with a single mouse-click, and a tap of the spacebar switches both directional control and targeting to the mouse cursor. This sends you soaring effortlessly around the skies and makes for some of the most accessible and exhilarating space combat we've ever seen; well worthy of building such an ambitious freeform concept around.

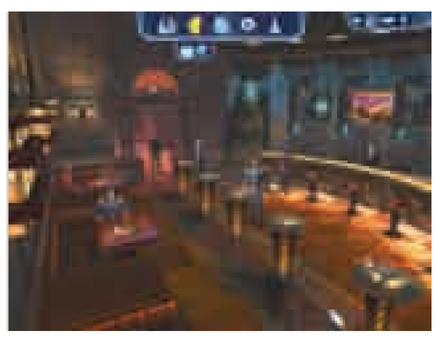
Until you can afford to kit out your ship with enough firepower to approach battles head-on you're going to have to come up with some pretty nifty moves to outwit your adversaries, which can present a tough learning curve for beginners. But sharpen your dogfighting skills enough to progress in the game and you could spend months immersed in the delights of the *Freelancer* universe. The sheer scale of the game is breathtaking, and there is an undeniable feeling of freedom in roaming the stars at your pleasure between missions. Whilst the missions do tend to play out rather similarly, the endless possibilities for how you can choose to put meat on the bones of the core combat engine create an engrossingly open-ended experience with high replay value.

VERDICT 8/10

AN ENTIRE UNIVERSE OF SPACE COMBAT POTENTIAL

HITTING THE BAR

In the future, life will revolve around the local pub. No change there then, but wherever you may roam in the *Freelancer* universe it is also the one sure place an out of work fighter-pilot-for-hire can expect to find a whole host of potential employers propping up the bar. It is here that Trent will shape his intergalactic reputation by deciding whose dirty work to carry out and, perhaps more importantly, who he is going make an enemy of in the process. You'll find all the latest news and juiciest plot-related gossip from the regulars, and the more you frequent a preferred watering hole, the greater acquaintances you will build. Since just about every settlement in the universe has a decent pub, there's little chance you'll ever run out of employment options – and you'll never be far from an ice-cold beer.





L1 at the correct time zooms in and makes getting past defenders almost too easy.



Standing still and holding the Skill button lets you show off for a bit.



The frequent replays allow you to play cameraman and get the optimum view of your crucial goals.

games™ FINGERPRINT

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

POINTS GALORE: Winning matches earns you points to spend on new teams, stadia and kits.

HOME SWEET HOME: *ISS3* lets you make your own stadia as well as customise players and teams.

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

OTHER FORMATS
GameCube, Xbox, PC

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Konami

DEVELOPER
In-House

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
Out Now

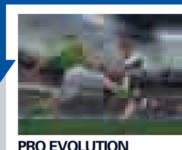
PLAYERS
1-8

FIFA 2003



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2

THE ISS/PRO EVO DIVIDE WIDENS AS THE SUPERSTAR MARCHES ON

ISS 3

Confusing naming has plagued Konami's soccer games for years. *ISS, Pro Evolution, Winning Eleven*… it's easy to get confused as to which games are actually worth playing. And now it's about to get harder to tell them apart as *International Superstar Soccer* is returning to its former glory. Looking and sounding every bit as good as its *Evolution* relatives (although the commentary is only marginally better), it doesn't take long to discover that this is more about modes and options than clinical gameplay, not that this is necessarily a bad thing. Also of note is that *ISS3* sports the same licence as the *Pro Evo* games, so while a lot of the international teams are named correctly, some have those false names that purists love to hate.

Controls across football games are almost standardised now, with each title using its own take on the tried and tested layout. Occasionally, you'll find the odd upstart like *FIFA* straying from the norm, but not here – *ISS3* initially appears to have the same commands and interface as many of its footballing brothers. Then you actually play it. While similar, anyone familiar with any other games depicting 22 men chasing a ball for cash will have a hard time adapting. Lacking the precision and refinement associated with the *Pro Evo* series and the official licences that grace the *FIFA* games, *ISS3* aims for an arcade-style experience but doesn't quite take it far enough to make it stand out.

As harsh and unfair as it may seem, this entire review could be summed up in just four words and a number – buy *Pro Evolution Soccer 2*. It really is that simple. Although *ISS3* has its own merits, every aspect which is integral to core gameplay is far superior in the *Pro Evo* series. Yes, it's refreshing to see referees, camera crews and stewards, and enjoyable to use the showboating secret skill moves, but these little touches have no real bearing on the quality of the game. What does have an impact, though, is the wealth of modes, unlockables and customisable features on offer, and while this may not be the last word in videogame football, these incentives will probably keep you playing regardless. Sufficiently different from both the major players (*Pro Evo* and *FIFA*), *ISS3* is a decent enough game which, although hovering between realism and fantasy, is at least worth checking out if you're not a *Pro Evo* person.

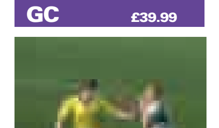


VERDICT 6/10
CURIOUSLY ADDICTIVE BUT LACKS REFINEMENT

GC £39.99

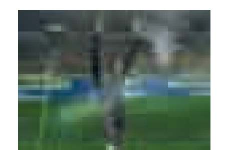
A FreeLoader and a copy of *WE6: Final Evolution* would be the best route to 'Cube football utopia, but if you want something that'll last ages and isn't as manic as *SEGA Soccer Slam*, try *ISS3*.

XBOX £39.99



ISS3 is easily the best Xbox footie title. Since we're as likely to see *Pro Evo* on the Xbox as we are to see *Halo 2* on the GBA, you may as well treat yourself.

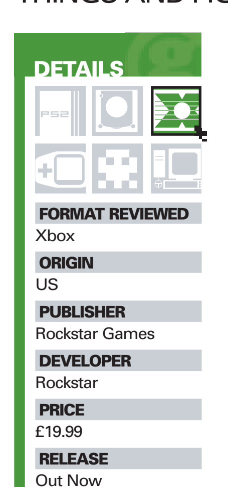
PC £29.99



Provided you've got a decent controller, there aren't many better digital versions of the beautiful game for PC. It may not improve on its console counterparts or push the hardware, but it'll do nicely.

STATE OF EMERGENCY

IS IT REALLY OKAY TO RUN AROUND BREAKING THINGS AND FIGHTING? HELL YES…



DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
Xbox

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
Rockstar Games

DEVELOPER
Rockstar

PRICE
£19.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1-4

If there's one thing worse than a sub-par PS2 game, it's a sub-par PS2 game being ported directly onto more powerful hardware. But although we're used to overpriced direct ports, *State Of Emergency* comes as something of a surprise clocking in at just a penny under twenty pounds for a special edition of the underwhelming riot-'em-up. The pretence is simple – break everything and hurt everyone. Well, sort of. Missions are allocated in the midst of the looting and destruction so you'll need to hunt down and kill people, perform deliveries of sensitive packages and suchlike. Despite the fact that each area houses 20 to 30 missions, these drag on horribly since each is worryingly similar to the last; follow the arrow to point A, find the target and escort/return/kill it as required.

Perishable fun. That's the best way to describe the larger-than-life riots that make up *State Of Emergency* – for the first few minutes, you'll probably genuinely enjoy yourself, but as you may expect, this cannot and does not last long. You may even find yourself going back to it later for another burst of violent delight; this is nothing to be ashamed of, as *State Of Emergency* does have a pick up and play factor that many other games would die for. Unfortunately, the price of this is longevity and even with just the odd hour here and there you'll most likely tire of the game or finish it after a relatively short time. With only five characters and four areas on offer, there isn't exactly vast scope for replay (by way of comparison, *Dynasty Warriors 3* has 40-odd characters and a wealth of missions and areas) and a mere two game modes certainly don't do much to help this.

In order for it to continue its respectable growth of late, this is just what the Xbox doesn't need – a port of an ageing PlayStation2 game. Granted, this one is unashamed of its heritage, as the budget price will verify, even providing gamers with added features that many such full price ports neglect, but it's still a game that many collections have long seen the back of. It's easy to see why, too; it perfectly mimics all the violence of *Grand Theft Auto* but lacks the humour, depth and subtle touches that make the *GTA* series so enjoyable. With a budget price point (and subsequently cheaper pre-owned price) and the 18 rating that makes it so popular among minors, we have no doubt that *State Of Emergency* will find its way into an Xbox or two. But in all fairness, it's worth splashing out a few extra notes for a superior title.



While character models may be crude, the action remains smooth even as the screen fills up with assailants.



games™ ENHANCED

IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL

MULTIPLAYER: It may not be much, but the multiplayer antics add a little life to the anarchy.

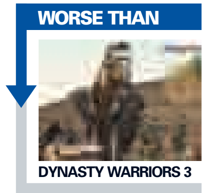
SHINY: The eagle-eyed among you may pick out some slightly smoother visuals. Just slightly, mind…

HUNTER: THE RECKONING



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



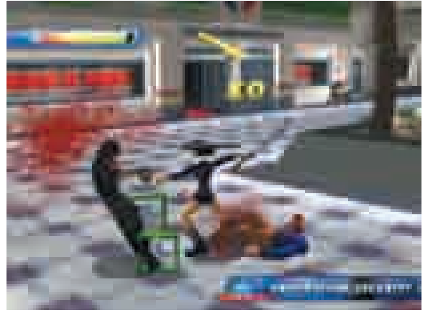
DYNASTY WARRIORS 3

VERDICT 4/10

AFFORDABLE BUT HORRIBLY REPETITIVE



Much of the scenery can be smashed up or thrown around. Insert your own 'bench press' gags here.



Bladed weapons carry the added bonus of removing heads and limbs – these dismembered parts can even be used as weapons.

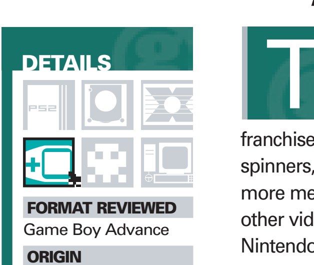


Shopping malls are the ideal locations for some sort of freak-out riot-fest. Try it next time you're in town…

THOSE CUDDLY COLLECTABLE CREATURES RETURN IN THEIR FIRST ADVANCED OUTING

POKÉMON RUBY/SAPPHIRE

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
Game Boy Advance

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Nintendo

DEVELOPER
Game Freak

PRICE
£29.99

RELEASE
Q4 '03 (Japan/US: Out Now)

PLAYERS
1-4

Think of some of the biggest selling Game Boy games. Alongside *Tetris* and the *Super Mario Land* games, the multi-million selling *Pokémon* franchise is one of Nintendo's biggest money spinners, raking in not only software profits but more merchandising money than arguably any other videogame. It's incredible to think that Nintendo has left the GBA bereft of the massively popular series for almost two years now. Most of the other key franchises have surfaced in some shape or form – Mario, Link, Kirby, *F-Zero*… the list goes on. After so long coming, you'd be justified in expecting the longest, toughest and best *Pokémon* adventure to date. And you'll be glad to hear that the game actually delivers in most of these areas – it's exactly what you'd expect from a *Pokémon* game and much more to boot, but at what price?

Even at first glance, lots of updates are apparent – new moves and two-on-two battles make for a much more strategic experience, as do the excellent Pokémon abilities. Ranging from the ability to power up certain moves or create weather effects, to attack absorption and spiny skin that causes damage to attackers, every monster has an innate skill that will help (or sometimes hinder) it in battle. These bring Pokémon to a whole new level of mental warfare that does battles no end of good, meaning a top trainer will need to learn all of these traits as well as how best to tackle or exploit them. New evolutions (and methods thereof) also help keep the experience refreshingly original but purists are still able to train up a humble Pikachu (who is no longer #25, Pokéfans), or any familiar monster for that matter, into a mighty combatant just like we've done so many times before. Side quests have also been made more apparent, so as well as making your way to Pokémon League glory, you'll need to be helping out people along the way – their priceless rewards will be thanks enough.

While in-game visuals may not greatly improve on their Game Boy Color counterparts, Pokémon sprites in battle are noticeably superior, almost to the point of being faithful to their anime depictions. This is all well and good but the battles still look and feel far too static, with nothing but a little idle movement and mostly mediocre attack animations to give a feeling of energy and involvement. This is superficially the game's weakest area – every other aspect of the look and feel has been tweaked to near perfection, with active weather, real-time reflections and as high a level of environmental interaction as we've seen in a handheld title. The end result may not be a mind-

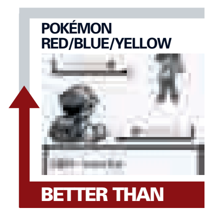
FAQs

Q. MORE MONSTERS?
Not right now. The wealth of new creatures brings the overall total to 386, but a mere 200 are obtainable across the two games.

Q. HOW DO YOU GET THEM?
One of the game's biggest mysteries. Rumours point to e-Cards, the forthcoming GameCube title and/or future GBA titles as viable possibilities.

Q. HOW LONG IS IT?
Even with a lower monster count than the previous installation, you'll easily lose 100 hours plus to the *Pokémon* bug.

POKÉMON RED/BLUE/YELLOW



BETTER THAN

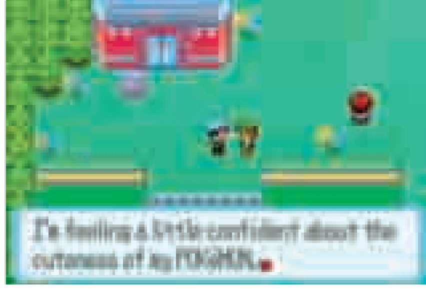
WORSE THAN



POKÉMON GOLD/SILVER/CRYSTAL



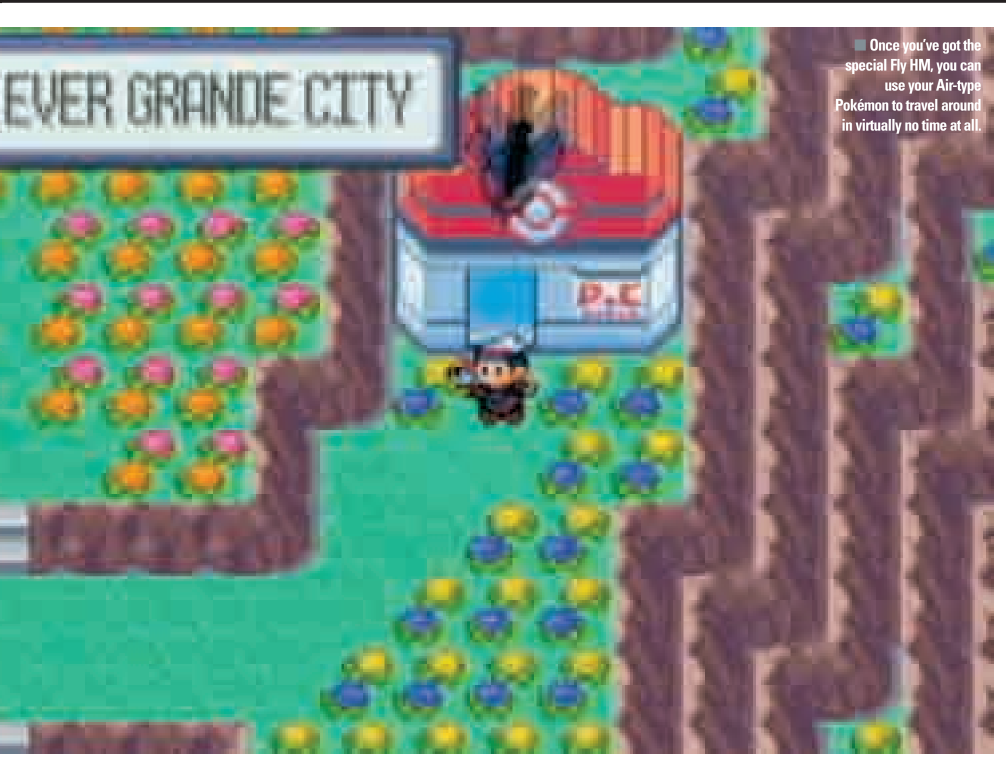
Some Pokémon come in really handy. For instance, get your hands on an Abra and you'll be able to train it to use some devastating Psychic attacks like… well, Psychic. Of course, actually catching one of the little buggers can prove to be a whole lot more trouble than it's worth…



All Pokémon battles are pre-empted by the most pointless comments imaginable – we can only wonder why they even bother.



Looking for wild Pokémon? Then you'll want to be rooting around in the undergrowth then – the natural resting place of all Pokémon wildlife.



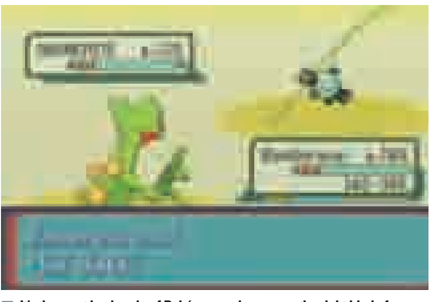
Once you've got the special Fly HM, you can use your Air-type Pokémon to travel around in virtually no time at all.



blowing technical achievement, but it still manages to create a charming and stylish world which you'll genuinely enjoy exploring. On that note, don't expect to finish this in a few days – exploring all of Hoenn will take a lot of time and commitment as well as a team of impeccably raised Pokémon, which requires some serious hard graft.

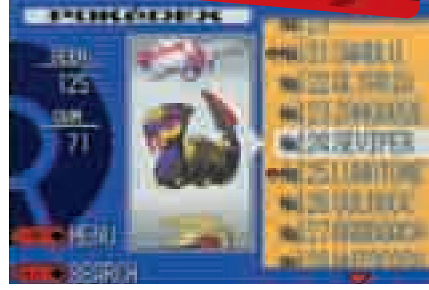
For all the improvements we've seen over every similar adventure out there, there are still a few gripes. The first of these is the lowered monster count – as an integral part of the game, knocking 20 per cent of the monsters out of the equation (200 monsters to *Gold* and *Silver*'s 251, although many of these are all-new creatures) really won't impress potential upgraders. We know that the rest of the old crew are in there too (the Japanese rom was hacked some time ago, revealing a total of 386 monsters programmed into the game) but it's how and if we gain access to these that remains a mystery. Another niggle is that Pokémon cries in the Pokédex are as primitive as ever (we've heard our Game Boys talk before, people – Pikachu doesn't make a muffled digital grunt in the TV show, does he?), and constant backtracking to level up for key encounters is still rife, though often enjoyable.

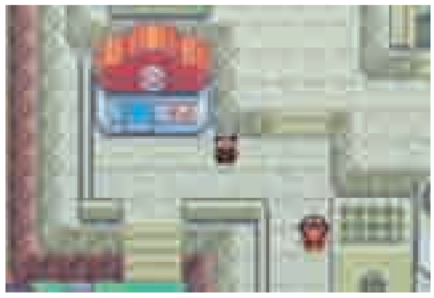
We've come to the conclusion that even when Nintendo puts out a title that doesn't quite live up to our high expectations, it usually still manages to eclipse most of the competition and make amends for many of its downfalls with innovations and evolutions (no pun intended). We could speculate all day about the countless potential uses for the connectivity that has been so well


It's the most basic rule of Pokémon – always use the right kind of Pokémon for the job. If you don't, you're going to regret it afterwards.

implemented, but until we see some serious use of this (battling and trading is to be expected – Pokédex expansions and new areas are what we're really rooting for), we're holding off with the fireworks. If we knew for sure that there were definitely 186 new monsters (or even new events and areas), this would easily score higher. As it stands, the confusion over just what is in the game means that we can't be overly optimistic yet. A wonderful experience in their own right, *Ruby* and *Sapphire* are well up there with the best handheld games, but until we're given reason to believe otherwise, catching them all could be being exploited a bit too much for its own good.




Yes, yes – it's all about catching 'em all. That said though, you don't have to actually catch a Pokémon to have it logged in your Pokédex.


Despite the added power of the Game Boy Advance, the graphics in *Pokémon Ruby* and *Sapphire* aren't all that much improved.

MYSTERY MADNESS

After reaching a certain point in the game, players can trigger something called Mystery Events. Rather than the item-exchanging shenanigans of *Gold* and *Silver*, this mystery has a lot more scope to it. At the moment it can only be used to battle new trainers via the e-Cards that come packaged with *Ruby* and *Sapphire*, but it's plain to see that this is just the infancy of something that could grow to be as involving as the main game. Without knowing what kind of connectivity this is set up for (or what Nintesix months should be very telling indeed. At this point, only further Trainer e-Cards are confirmed (by the official website, no less) but to see this connective potential wasted would sadden our hearts in a way that only the absence of Wooper and Quagsire can rival. Still, there's always Jigglypuff…



DOES THIS RPG SEQUEL PLAY ITS CARDS RIGHT?

LOST KINGDOMS II

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
GameCube

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Activision

DEVELOPER
FROM Software

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
16 May (Japan/US: Out Now)

PLAYERS
1-2

When it came out shortly after the launch of the GameCube, *Lost Kingdoms* came as a bit of a surprise to RPG fans; its fusion of arcade adventure and RPG elements, combined with a clever card system, appealed to gamers looking for something a bit different. It wasn't faultless however, and although FROM Software has adopted the 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it' approach for the sequel, it has listened to the criticisms levelled at the first title and done its best to solve them.

The plot is standard RPG fare (young girl liberates kingdom from faceless foe… yadda yadda), and while our heroine only starts the game with a deck of limited magical cards, she is soon able to summon all manner of monsters from them with which to do battle in true Top Trumps style. The control system is as user-friendly as ever – each of your four available cards are mapped to the pad's face buttons – and there are now over two hundred monsters to scrap with. There's even a new transformational card that enables you to adopt the forms of certain monsters and then use their attacks against designated foes. Actual combat is also more refined – rather than being forced to slug it out in confined invisible boundaries, there are now no such restrictions. This enhanced liberation, along with a sensible camera, ensures that you are always in control – regardless of how intense later battles get. On top of all this, one of the main gripes with the first game – the fact that it was very easy to quickly lose all of your 30-card deck – has been remedied for the sequel.

But although many of the gameplay problems have been ironed out, there's still room for improvement, at least on an aesthetic level. The visuals are as dull as ever with flat, featureless textures and below-par animation, while the audio is just as average, sporting some bizarre scores and the campest voice acting this side of a Julian Clary convention. Not only that, but there is no variety in the gameplay to break up the bouts of card battling. That's not say that the game itself is bad – indeed, *Lost Kingdoms II* is certainly a step up from the last outing, which itself fitted neatly into the 'good if you like this sort of thing' category. Unfortunately though, it's too much of a niche title to appeal to the majority of gamers. Though enjoyment can be found – especially in the improved two-player game – its unique brand of RPG gameplay may prove its undoing, especially with the imminent arrival of *The Wind Waker*…

VERDICT 6/10
GOOD ENHANCEMENTS, BUT STILL LIMITED APPEAL

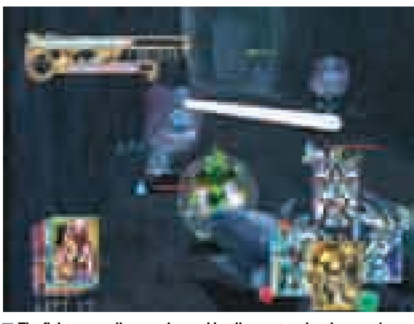
LOST KINGDOMS

BETTER THAN

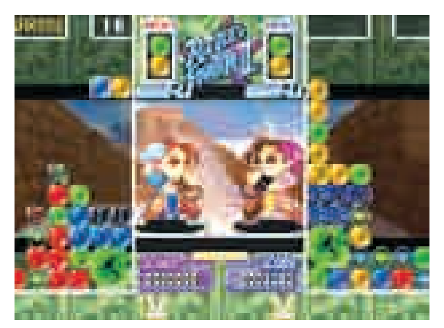
WORSE THAN

SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS

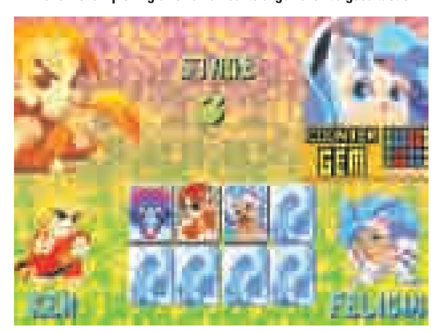

Pick a card, any card – although preferably one that will help you see off these weapon-wielding thugs. Don't use all of them in a hurry, mind – there are over two hundred of these nasties lining up to get a piece of you.


The fight scenes liven up the card battling system, but the game's graphics are somewhat lacking.


The card system of battling works quite well but is unlikely to appeal to anyone who didn't enjoy the first *Lost Kingdoms* game.



The key to winning is setting up chains and then wiping them all out in one move – picking off small amounts of gems isn't a good tactic.



All the fighters from the game are lifted straight out of Capcom's cutesy *Street Fighter* mini-clone beat-'em-up, *Pocket Fighter*.



Pulling off a massive chain of gem destructive combos makes your character perform their super moves against your opponent.

SUPER PUZZLE FIGHTER II TURBO

FINALLY, CAPCOM'S PUZZLEY BEAT-'EM-UP FINDS ITS SPIRITUAL HOME

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
Game Boy Advance

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Capcom

DEVELOPER
In-House

PRICE
£29.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1-2

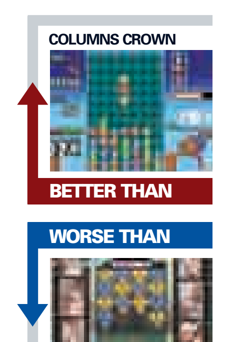
No matter what format they originally get released on, some games, mostly of the puzzle variety, are just begging to be ported to handheld consoles. It might sound cynical, but think about it – if *Tetris* hadn't have been released on the Game Boy, would it really have been as successful as it was? Probably not. It's the fact that certain games are meant to be 'pick up and play' that they work so well on handheld consoles – after all, 'pick up and play' is precisely what handhelds like the Game Boy are for.

With that in mind then, it's not that surprising to see *Super Puzzle Fighter II Turbo* being ported to the GBA. Having already appeared on the PSone, Saturn and even in arcades, Capcom's attempt at melding its stock cast of fighting characters with a version of the *Columns*/*Puyo Pop* theme wasn't at all bad – even if doing well at it was more luck than judgement. Obviously, joining coloured gems together and then using special 'crash' gems to destroy them isn't a task that requires a degree in rocket science. However, with the key to success (against the computer, at least) involving having to think at least three, four or sometimes more moves ahead, it's certainly not a puzzle game for everyone (unless you enjoy tearing out your own hair, that is).

As you might expect, the GBA version is a perfect port of the PSone game, which is no bad thing. Unfortunately, this pretty much negates any possibilities for improvements. It's still got a basic Arcade mode, as well as a more interesting Street Puzzle mode where you 'fight' against particularly tough opponents to win bonuses like extra costumes and sound tests. This being the GBA though, there's also the option to link up with your mates and play with them – nothing new there. But what is a nice touch is that the game lets two people play at once, even if you've only got one GBA. Admittedly, it sounds bizarre but it does actually work quite well; one person gets the D-pad and L button, while the other gets the A, B and R buttons as both people fight over the screen. Sadly, it's this fact alone that makes the game stand out over other examples of the same genre; other than that, the actual game isn't special enough to warrant more than the usual amount of puzzle fan attention.



VERDICT 6/10
QUITE FUN, BUT FRUSTRATINGLY DIFFICULT AT TIMES




Your bunker is your centre of operations where you can read up on missions, backgrounds and equipment to keep yourself up to speed.


Play those VC snipers at their own game – pinch one of their weapons and use it against them.


A wide range of weapons are at your disposal, but make sure you choose the right one for the job.

gamesTM GLOBAL

TAKING GAMING ONLINE

EPIC: Two thirty-strong armies battling it out is quite a sight and even better when you're part of it.

JOIN UP: If all-out war isn't your idea of fun, team up with other gamers and take out the VC together.

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PC

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
Take Two

DEVELOPER
Illusion/Pterodon

PRICE
£29.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1-64

MINIMUM SPEC
Pentium III 700, 256MB RAM, 32MB 3D card

VIETCONG

FANCY DOING YOUR BIT IN THE VIETNAM WAR? AH, GO ON…

The PC seems to have a knack of attracting the best war games on the market. As well as the wealth of strategy titles that would never work with the button limitations of a console controller, games like *Operation Flashpoint* and *Medal Of Honor* have seen their finest hours on the world's most expensive gaming platform. It's hard to pin down exactly why this is, but as long as PC owners are treated to reality-based shooters of such a standard, the trend shows no sign of letting up. The World Wars have been depicted in countless games, leaving smaller conflicts to take a back seat – until now. *Vietcong* drops the player straight into the worn shoes of Sergeant Steve Hawkins and follows his plight through the Vietnam War.

There's no two ways about it – *Vietcong* is a very good-looking game. Surroundings, character models, weapons and vehicles have all been impressively rendered to resemble their real-life counterparts and the likenesses are spot-on. You will, of course, need a respectable gaming-standard PC to get *Vietcong* to look anywhere near its best, but it can be tweaked to run fairly smoothly on a lower spec machine. Sound is very effective, and save for a little repetition in terms of quips and statements from your comrades, speech is well delivered and often useful too. In terms of presentation, it's hard to fault *Vietcong*'s style, but perhaps the best part is the character interaction – soldiers actually step over, round and across obstacles rather than simply jumping or crouching to avoid their general area. Impressive stuff.

To look this good takes ages, and, er, an extremely powerful PC. Luckily, the game will run on lower spec machines.


Vehicles and weapons have been rendered to look as much like the real thing as possible.





AS REAL AS IT GETS

It's plain to see that every effort has been put into making the experience as gritty and realistic as possible, and this manifests itself wonderfully. Soldiers climb over logs and rocks realistically and enemies use cover in the most devious places, making sure you're on your guard, not to mention overly cautious and jumpy at all times. Carrying capacity, armaments and terrain are all well within the constraints of realism too – even enemy reactions are splendidly realised and surprisingly intelligent. They'll run away if a comrade goes down, use grenades and react to yours… even set deadly traps that you probably won't find until it's too late. Conversation is also convincing – your squad reacts and informs you of enemies and traps, and you'll need to be in constant contact with those in charge if you want to keep on top of your mission objectives. Better concentrate on keeping that radioman alive then…

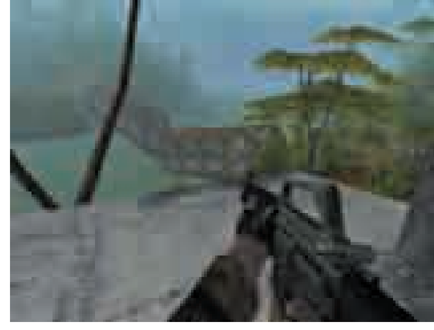
Despite the excellent use of graphics and sound, there's still one area that impressed us even more – atmosphere. *Vietcong* is blessed with a rare ability that we haven't truly seen since *Operation Flashpoint* in that it manages to instil a real sense of mortality and dread in the player. The language and realism does a more than serviceable job of maintaining this suspense between fire fights and paranoia, but the excessive use of profanities can verge on the gratuitous at times, cheapening things just a little. There are a few other little niggles that don't do this mood any favours – some mild path-finding problems exist which can make your point man take some rather curious routes, and the game does suffer a little from 'trial and error' syndrome in places. A lot of this is due to enemy snipers, as while you may not see them as they pick you off the first time, the game zooms in on your killer after they've hit you, leaving you free to easily return the favour on a later attempt.

Even to the untrained eye, it's evident that a lot of care and attention has been paid to the single-player side of the game and for once the same is also true of the online multiplayer. Rather than the tacked-on affair that devalues many similar games, the full-scale wars that *Vietcong*'s multi-player modes allow for complement the main game wonderfully – human opponents can be even more devious than the AI, making the experience even more edgy. There is also the ability to tackle quick scenarios and battles in Quick Fight mode, where progress through the main game makes extra firearms, items and areas available for your brief battling needs. These skirmishes are a welcome alternative to the main game as they are usually shorter, simpler and more intense than the main game mode's huge levels and evolving storylines.

Special mention is also in order for *Vietcong*'s hardest difficulty level, Vietnam. Ditching all FPS conventions, this supremely tough onslaught gives you no indication of how many bullets remain in your clip or what your health situation is, not that it'll make much difference since you're always only a few shots away from dying for your country. Vietnam mode will test even the best players, especially considering the game is anything but easy on the default settings. Loitering somewhere between the in-depth planning and tactics of *Rainbow Six* or *Hidden And Dangerous* and the more gung-ho shooters on the market, *Vietcong* fills the middle ground (for which there is definitely a market) more than adequately.

At a time when many similar games fail to live up to expectations, falling onto shelves unnoticed and soon finding their way to bargain bins, we had feared the same fate may befall *Vietcong*. Thankfully, not only does the finished game surpass our early expectations but with the right backing, this gritty shooter should find its way into homes, hard drives and sales charts alike as it deserves to. It's high time PC owners had another respectable shooter to wave in the faces of *TimeSplitters 2*, *Halo* and *Die Hard: Vendetta* (snigger), especially after the disappointment of *Unreal II*. Although we're still waiting for the next bona fide classic PC shooter, *Vietcong* is an exceptional product that stands head and shoulders above much of the competition.





You can almost feel the oppressive heat and humidity of the Vietnamese jungle. You're clearly sitting too close to the screen…



Notice the lack of a HUD? It's amazing we even lasted this long on Vietnam difficulty…



These are a few of the men you'll be in close contact with throughout your operations. Learn what they do and when to make them do it.

FAQs

Q. WHY THE RATING?
Aside from the violent nature of shooting people in the head, the game is littered with colourful language.

Q. LIFESPAN?
The main game is a decent length, and between the extra difficulty settings, quick fights and massive multiplayer potential, there's plenty to get your teeth into.

Q. LINEARITY?
Being mission-based, the structure itself is fairly linear but the way in which you're required to tackle tasks is anything but.

IGI 2



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



COUNTER STRIKE

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

OTHER FORMATS
Xbox, PC

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
Rockstar Games

DEVELOPER
Rockstar San Diego

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
Out Now

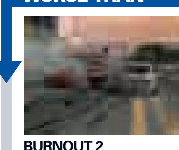
PLAYERS
1-4

MIDNIGHT CLUB



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



BURNOUT 2

IF IT'S ILLEGAL, THEN IT'S GOT TO BE FUN… RIGHT?

MIDNIGHT CLUB II

As we all know, crime doesn't pay – unless your idea of payment is earning a few pennies a day doing the laundry inside a medium-security prison. Of course, there's just no telling some people. Take Rockstar Games, for instance. As of late, the industry golden child seems to be making money hand over fist through the peddling of violence, theft and all-round skulduggery. With the immense success of the *GTA* series and now the release of illegal racing sequel *Midnight Club II*, Rockstar seems to have found its specialist subject and, obviously, there's little chance of a games publisher trying something new when it already knows exactly what it's good at.

The concept from the original game hasn't changed much for *Midnight Club II* – participate in illegal street races through several cities, hit checkpoints and try to reach the finish line in first place. In fact, to the untrained eye it's hard to see where any changes have been made to the game since the last one; you can still go pretty much anywhere you want to (including smashing through scenery and taking imaginative short cuts), you still win new vehicles by taking them from defeated rivals and there's still more than enough arcade-style racing to go round. Sadly, such is the way with sequels – particularly ones that focus on such a specific topic. Just because it's not that different though, doesn't mean it's not better; a fact that *Midnight Club II* proves by being far more enjoyable than the original.

Like we said, the basic game itself hasn't really changed – instead, Rockstar San Diego has gone about improving everything else instead. It really is all about the little things when you look at how *Midnight Club II* is better than the original – there are more cars to earn (plus the now obligatory motorbike), more cities to race in (three, including Tokyo which was dropped from the original), more special abilities to discover for your vehicles and just, well, more in general. The look of the game is much improved, as is the soundtrack and voice acting – not surprisingly, the whole thing has much more of a *GTA* flavour about it. Best of all though, Rockstar has thought far enough ahead to include online play right out of the box – even though Sony hasn't given any specifics about when the PS2's online service will begin. Although PS2 players will only be able to go online against other PS2 owners (ditto for the PC and Xbox versions – damn the difficulties of cross-platform online gaming), the fact that it's there at all makes for some exciting possibilities in the near future. What's more, it's damn fun too; having sat down with all the online modes for several hours, we nearly couldn't tear ourselves away.

FAQs

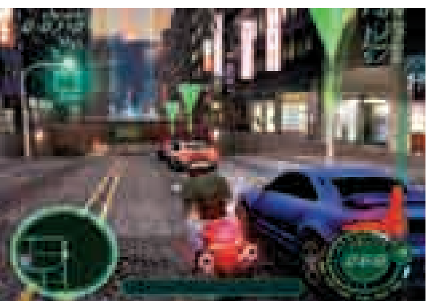
Q. HOW MANY TRACKS?
There are only three cities to explore, but more than enough unique courses (and you can even create your own with the handy Race Editor).

Q. BETTER THAN THE ORIGINAL?
Most definitely, thanks to the distinctly *GTA* feel that each race has. Rockstar obviously knows where its strengths lie.

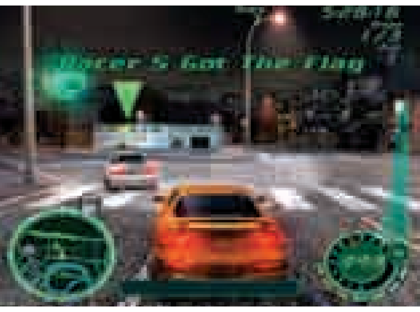
Q. WHY SO DIFFICULT?
It's probably less to do with the courses actually being challenging and more about the fact that at least one of the computer opponents in every race takes the perfect line every time. Yes – *every* time.



The police are a constant bane during races and will try to set up roadblocks (or even barge you off the road) in an attempt to stop you. They're no fun…



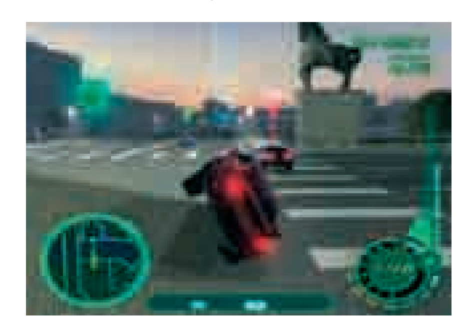
Riding the bike is damn tricky to begin with, but once you've mastered it you'll be pulling wheelies off like there's no tomorrow.



Capture The Flag is a great laugh against your friends, especially when played online – once you've played it, you'll be hooked.

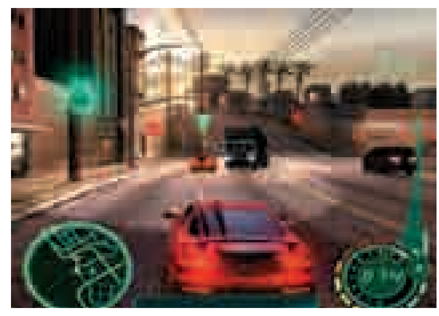
LOOK MA, NO WHEELS

Although you'll start off the Career mode with the most basic of automobiles (and we do mean basic), you'll soon start winning bigger and better cars as you outsmart each of the challengers you meet. While some of these cars are simply slightly faster or more controllable versions of previous models, others offer special upgrades that allow you to increase your driving skills. From the more obvious examples like the Nitrous Boost (*The Fast And The Furious*, we salute you) to impressive techniques like Weight Balance, Slipstreaming and Burnout, each one adds something to the gameplay that you'll have to keep in mind when trying to reach the finish line in first place. If you make it really far into the game, you can even find cars that allow you to go up onto two wheels and race down really narrow spaces. Just like in real life, then.





Some of the power-ups available during the multiplayer modes are pretty unbelievable, but you'll need them if you want to be a winner.



Although taking the shortest route is always a good idea, driving down the wrong side of the road into traffic is going to lead to trouble…



There are plenty of familiar landmarks littered around the various stages, helping to make each race more interesting for the tourists out there.

Unfortunately, the one problem that *Midnight Club II* suffers from is one that was present last time around. The free-roaming nature of the game means that there are no set courses to follow. While this is by no means a bad thing, it does mean that you will, without a doubt, lose virtually every race the first few times you play it through not knowing which way to go. Learning the best route for each course is obviously the key to success, but having to run through each race remembering exactly which turn to take and which short cuts are worthy of your attention can become a bit of a chore at times. Indeed, it's particularly bad on the later stages, where you'll always be facing at least one opponent who takes the perfect racing line every single time (using AI that suffers from what we like to refer to as *Mario Kart Syndrome*).

As you get further into the game, making even the tiniest mistake is cause enough to start the race all over again, simply because catching up with the leader becomes nigh-on impossible. If you want a comparison, it's almost akin to a racing version of *Rick Dangerous* – you race until you make a mistake, remember not to make it next time… until you hit another mistake and have to do it all over again. Frustrating? Certainly. But then the structure of *Midnight Club II* makes this the nature of the beast and therefore, it's something you just have to learn to live with. Obviously, *Midnight Club II* isn't going to be for everybody – a lack of realism will put off a lot of driving fans – but as arcade racing games go, *Midnight Club II* is good fun. On the other hand though, because success requires having to learn a lot of the tracks verbatim, the game isn't as immediate or intense as its nearest rival, *Burnout 2* – something that's been compounded in our minds thanks to the imminent release of the GameCube and Xbox versions. In a perfect world, you'd buy both – because it's not though, *Midnight Club II* ends up coming a very close second. Or first loser, in illegal street racing terms.

gamesTM GLOBAL

TAKING GAMING ONLINE

FIRST PLACE: *Midnight Club II* takes the award for being the first online racer for three different formats.

A LA MODE: You can play against your friends (or enemies) on five different multiplayer game modes.

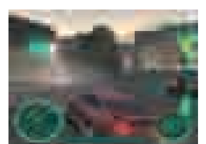


Falling behind? Then you'll probably want to take a bit of a shortcut down any number of alleyways. Just make sure you don't get lost, eh?

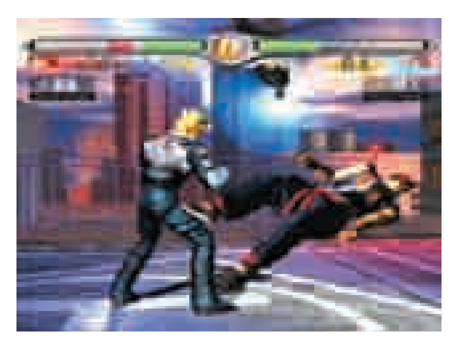
XBOX £39.99 OUT NOW

Thanks to the joys of Xbox Live, you can play this one online right now – although the controller isn't quite as good for the lightning-paced action. Still, it's a good start for Live.

PC £29.99 OUT NOW



The PC version obviously looks nice and sharp (if you've got a decent machine, that is) but you'll need a wheel or gamepad to get the most out of it or it might feel odd.



The lighting effects have been vastly improved since the standard version of *VF4* on PS2. Things look a lot more dynamic this time around.



The water effects in this arena are very nice indeed. All, er, watery.



Environmental effects, such as sand that compresses beneath the fighters' feet, help to integrate the characters into the backgrounds.

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Sony

DEVELOPER
SEGA AM2

PRICE
¥6,800 (£36)

RELEASE
TBA (Japan: Out Now, US: TBA)

PLAYERS
1-2

VIRTUA FIGHTER 4 EVOLUTION

WILL THIS UPDATE BRING ENOUGH NEW FEATURES TO WARRANT ITS RELEASE?



V*irtua Fighter 4* was one of SEGA's biggest sellers when it launched on PS2 last year – especially in Japan where more than 500,000 copies were bought. Interestingly, despite such undisputed popularity, sales of *VF4* were still way behind *Virtua Fighter 2* on SEGA Saturn, which shifted 1.7 million copies following its Japanese launch in 1995. However, the *Virtua Fighter* series as a whole has always been viewed a little more like Marmite in the West, in that you tend to either love it or hate it. As 3D fighting games go, *Virtua Fighter* has always been the most complex, with literally thousands of moves available and myriad combos and reversals. However, timing each move so it successfully connects is of far more importance than it is with most other similar titles, and many gamers struggle to grasp the many subtle elements involved with this.

Virtua Fighter 4 Evolution continues the trend for tons of skill-based moves, though SEGA is gradually introducing a selection of new, more accessible characters. For example, Lei-Fei, who was first featured in the standard *Virtua Fighter 4*, certainly has more than his fair share of basic combos, while newcomers Gou Hinogami and Brad Burns both look a lot more *Tekken* than *Virtua Fighter*. In fact, a few other *Tekken*-esque elements (such as a flash of light when moves connect, or a camera change when certain throws are used) have also been 'borrowed' here – bringing a little flashiness to an otherwise realistic (and somewhat humourless) game.

However, *Virtua Fighter* fans shouldn't worry about this being any less hard-core than the previous games. Although the game is slightly more accessible, experienced players will be able to outwit newcomers with a few well-timed reversals. The game's designer, Yu Suzuki, points out that characters with many easy-to-perform combos always have weaknesses in other areas. Lei-Fei, for instance, can easily be countered during or after performing a combo as almost all of his attacks take him forwards in a straight line, leaving him open to strikes from the side or behind should his moves be dodged. This really is what *Virtua Fighter* is all about – the many nuances that exist could take years to learn, much to the enjoyment

FAQs

Q. HOW MANY CHARACTERS?
Fifteen, including newcomers Gou Hinogami and Brad Burns.

Q. HAVE ANY CHARACTERS BEEN AXED?
Taka Arashi, the sumo wrestler from *Virtua Fighter 3*, was removed because Yu Suzuki wasn't happy with the way his fat was simulated. Poor lad.

Q. SOUND AND MUSIC?
Interestingly, *VF4 Evolution* has quite an old-school-feeling soundtrack, though the voice samples are bang up to date.

VALUE FOR MONEY

Making a welcome return in *VF4 Evolution* is Quest Mode. This option sets certain tasks and missions in order to earn extra costumes, accessories and even artwork. You earn money which can be spent on whatever extras you like – so you could dress Aoi in a yellow jumpsuit, or even highlight her hair. Another nice extra lets you play against simulated versions of Japan's best *Virtua Fighter* players. SEGA went all over Japan and recorded each of them fighting, then programmed the CPU to mimic their skill level and favourite moves. The game even includes maps of each area, along with photographs of the SEGA Parks where individual players were discovered.



of the fans. Of course, the standard version of *VF4* also included most of the elements we've already mentioned, though we couldn't help feeling that the PS2 translation was a little lacking.

Although Yu Suzuki and his team had done a commendable job of cramming almost all of the textures from the arcade version into the PS2's limited memory, the visual display left a lot to be desired. By the time *VF4* was released, most PS2 developers were getting to grips with the hardware's flickery output. But AM2 was new to the hardware, and although the team mastered most elements of the complex architecture, a lot of the work was in vain because so much was lost through jaggies and texture shimmering. It seems the team was well aware of the problem though, as *VF4 Evolution* has been greatly improved. Not only is the image quality faultless, but little details that had been omitted during the original translation (such as the coloured light-sourcing and dual searchlights that followed the fighters in the city rooftop level) have been reintroduced and help to make a much more complete product.

Aside from the visual adjustments, the arenas also benefit from a few nice amendments – most notably the ability to get ring-outs. Although some of the stages allowed this in the previous *VF* title, most arenas were surrounded by perimeter fences. By contrast, almost all of *Evolution*'s arenas feature either breakable barriers or gaps in the fences through which fighters can be knocked out of the ring. When Yu Suzuki was working on the arcade version of *Virtua Fighter 4*, he said that the



Akira tends to be the hard-core player's choice as he's one of the most complex fighters to use. But he's getting a good smacking from Jeffry.

uneven floors and split-level arenas seen in *Virtua Fighter 3* were to be removed so that more emphasis could be placed on the actual fighting, though we felt that the (mostly) enclosed arenas in *VF4* reduced some of the tension, strategy and excitement that had been so prominent before. *VF4 Evolution*, by comparison, balances all the elements perfectly, as well as a whole bunch of new features of its own – resulting in what's easily the best *Virtua Fighter* game so far.

After *Tekken*'s domination of the top spot for the past few years, it's nice to see the original 3D fighting game leading the beat-'em-up genre once more. However, with *Soul Calibur II* launching so closely behind it in Japan, the chances are that *VF4 Evolution*'s success (if any) will be short-lived.

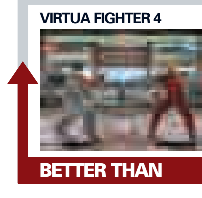
games™ ENHANCED

IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL

MORE FIGHTERS: Two new fighters are here – Gou Hinogami, an assassin, and kickboxer Brad Burns.

MORE MOVES: All the existing characters have been subtly upgraded and are now more balanced.

VIRTUA FIGHTER 4



BETTER THAN

AS GOOD AS



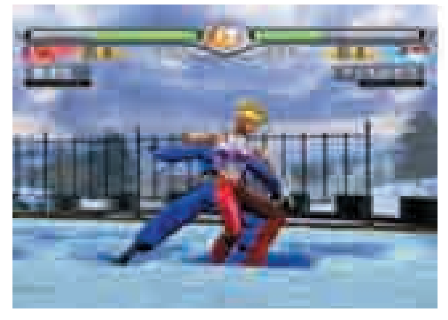
SOUL CALIBUR II (ARCADE)

VERDICT 8/10

EASILY THE BEST VIRTUA FIGHTER GAME SO FAR

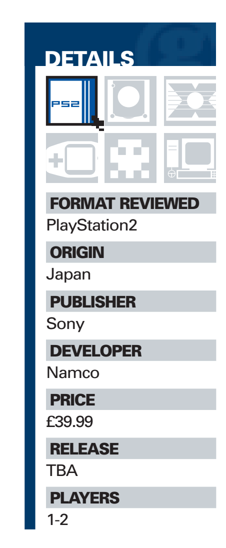


During some throws, the camera moves in to increase the dramatic impact. From their faces, you can see how the fighters are feeling.



Many of the throws and counter attacks are incredibly complex – you can even see individual fingers moving as fighters strike various poses.


Lose control of your bike and the rider will be sent skywards rather suddenly.


DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Sony

DEVELOPER
Namco

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
TBA

PLAYERS
1-2

MOTO GP 3

NAMCO'S OFFICIALLY LICENSED RACER ENTERS ITS THIRD SEASON

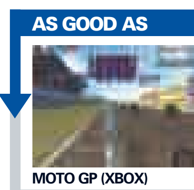

Challenge mode throws some truly evil courses at you – don't go clipping that kerb now.

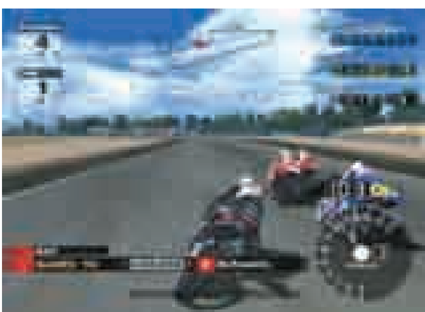
Different songs are given the same name all the time, so why is there such a fuss when it happens with videogames? Thankfully, there'll be no confusion here since both *Moto GP* games are exclusive to a single console. This, the Namco offering, stands as the longest running of the two and, as such, should by now have found its feet and have the motorbike racing formula down perfectly, right?

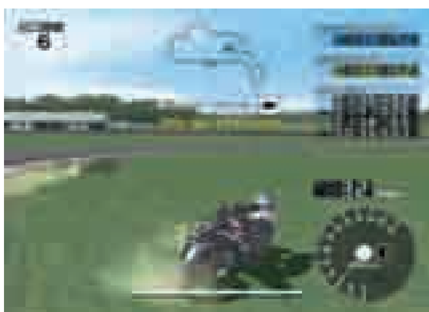
The first thing to point out is that *Moto GP 3* isn't remarkably superior to the first game in the series in terms of actual gameplay. But since that worked fairly well in the first place this is far from problematic. Other than the obvious tweaks to team line-ups and season courses that come

RIDING SPIRITS

BETTER THAN

AS GOOD AS

MOTO GP (XBOX)


The graphics aren't the best we've ever seen, but they're pretty enough and they get the job done.


Moto GP 3 is fairly harsh when it comes to the route you take, so no cutting corners or riding wherever you like.


All the stats and team line-ups have been updated for the new season, as is often the way with these officially licensed games.

FAQs

Q. HOW DIFFERENT?
Not that much, although it's difficult to change a genre that's pretty much set in stone. Still, the Challenge mode certainly makes for a nice little extra.

Q. SIMULATION OR ARCADE?
A bit of both, depending on which mode you choose to play it on. Personally, we prefer Arcade – but then that's just us.

Q. ISN'T THIS AN ONLINE GAME?
No – you're getting confused with the Xbox game of the same name. Easy mistake to make, we suppose…



gamesTM
ENHANCED
IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL
CHALLENGING: Challenge mode's hundred unlockables will keep you riding for a good while.
SMOOTHER: Graphics, sounds and handling have all been tweaked.

with any regular update of such a series, a lot of work on this third installation has gone into the game as a package rather than just the racing aspect. As a result, the multiplayer has been improved and greater longevity added through more in-depth Season and Legends modes. But the icing on the slick-tyred cake is definitely Challenge mode. A hundred tasks await you here, each unlocking new riders, galleries, courses and more with the challenges themselves ranging from setting course or split time records to navigating obstacle courses or beating Mr Driller in a drag race. These alone will keep you playing for weeks before you even touch on the other modes.

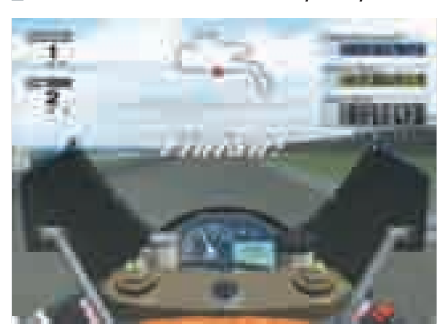
Looking at all three games in the series side by side, it would take quite a keen eye to pick out which title is which – there really isn't that much difference in the quality at all. It may not be pushing back the boundaries of visual excellence but graphics here are more than functional and the audio is of the same thoroughly acceptable standard. The music is the weakest area, but even that is fairly harmless and most of the time you won't even notice it's there. Controls work really quite well once you've set them up to your tastes; we favoured the double stick set-up for precision control – this is the best way to gauge acceleration and braking accurately and is therefore perfect for the harsh reality of Simulation mode.

There are two main styles of play on offer, each differing vastly from the other. With Simulation mode turned off, the game is as arcadey as they come, making it hard to crash and easy to take corners, as one would expect from a simplified racer. Switching to Simulation brings some dramatic changes, meaning you'll need to perfect every aspect of your technique as even the slightest excess in leaning while turning will see your wheels slide into the gravel trap. Not a pretty sight, but one that the Simulation settings demand you get used to and give up, or avoid and triumph. As such, *Moto GP 3* should appeal to all kinds of racing fans from those who enjoy a quick blast on *Burnout* to racers who can't hit the starting grid without at least ten minutes of preparatory tweaking.

The fact that this is little more than a repackage doesn't do *Moto GP 3* any favours, but so much work has gone into the extra content that it would be wrong to dismiss it as a lazy update. We very much enjoyed *Moto GP 3* – thanks to the excellent array of play modes, a lengthy run in Season mode can be broken up with Legend or Challenge races, which stop (or at very least delay) the onset of any boredom. If you don't have a bike racer in your collection and fancy giving one a go, this is as good a place to start as any – from officially licensed racers and courses to stacks of things to do and unlock, *Moto GP 3* comes heartily recommended to newcomers. Previous owners should at least give it a spin too, as while the updates aren't overwhelming there's enough new material to appeal to the racing purist on merit of the accurate subject matter alone. As a standalone game this is great fun but as the third game in a long-running trilogy, this should have been better. Definitely a missed opportunity.

VERDICT 6/10
NOT A VAST IMPROVEMENT BUT FUN NONETHELESS

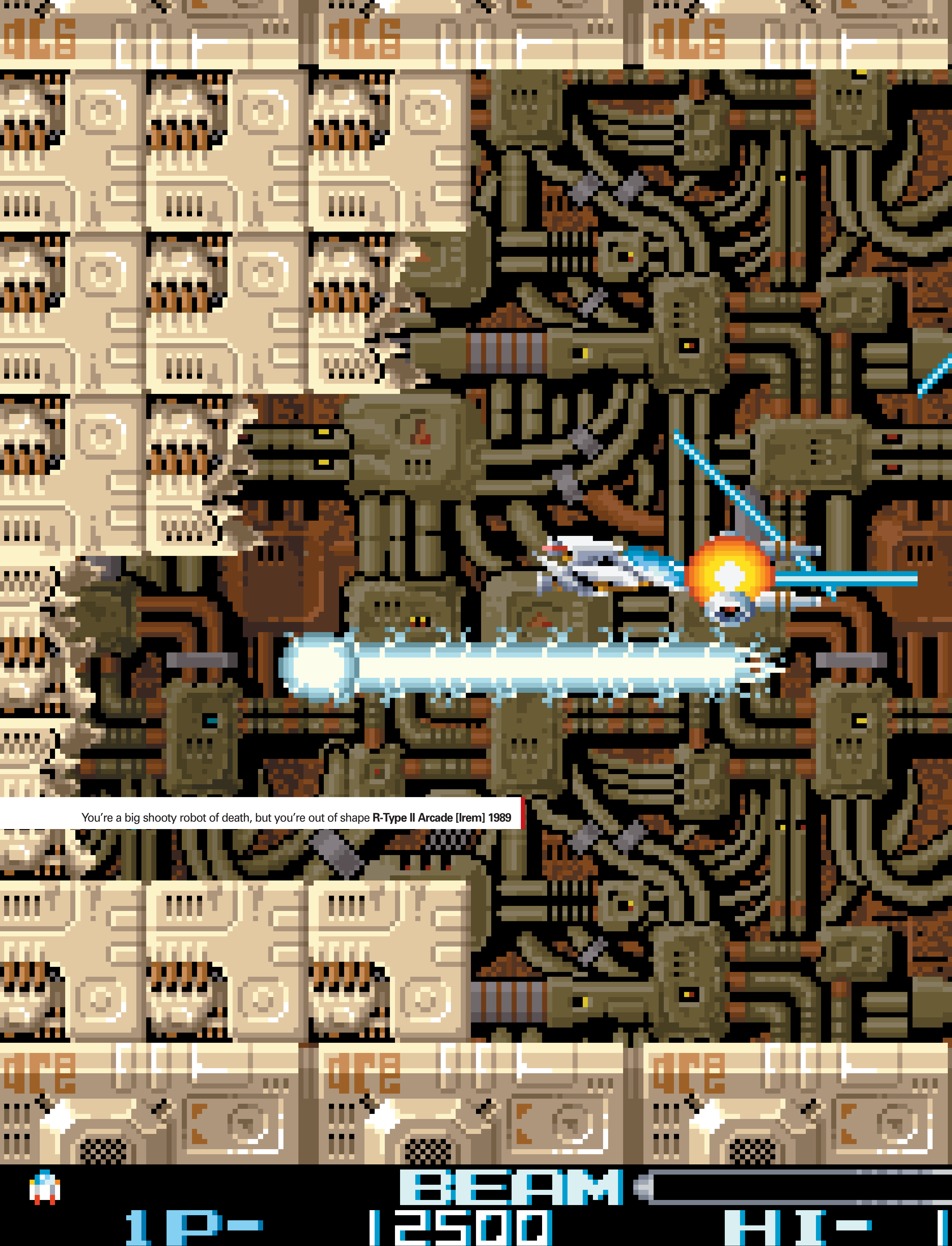
Mr Driller – the best unlockable character money can't buy.



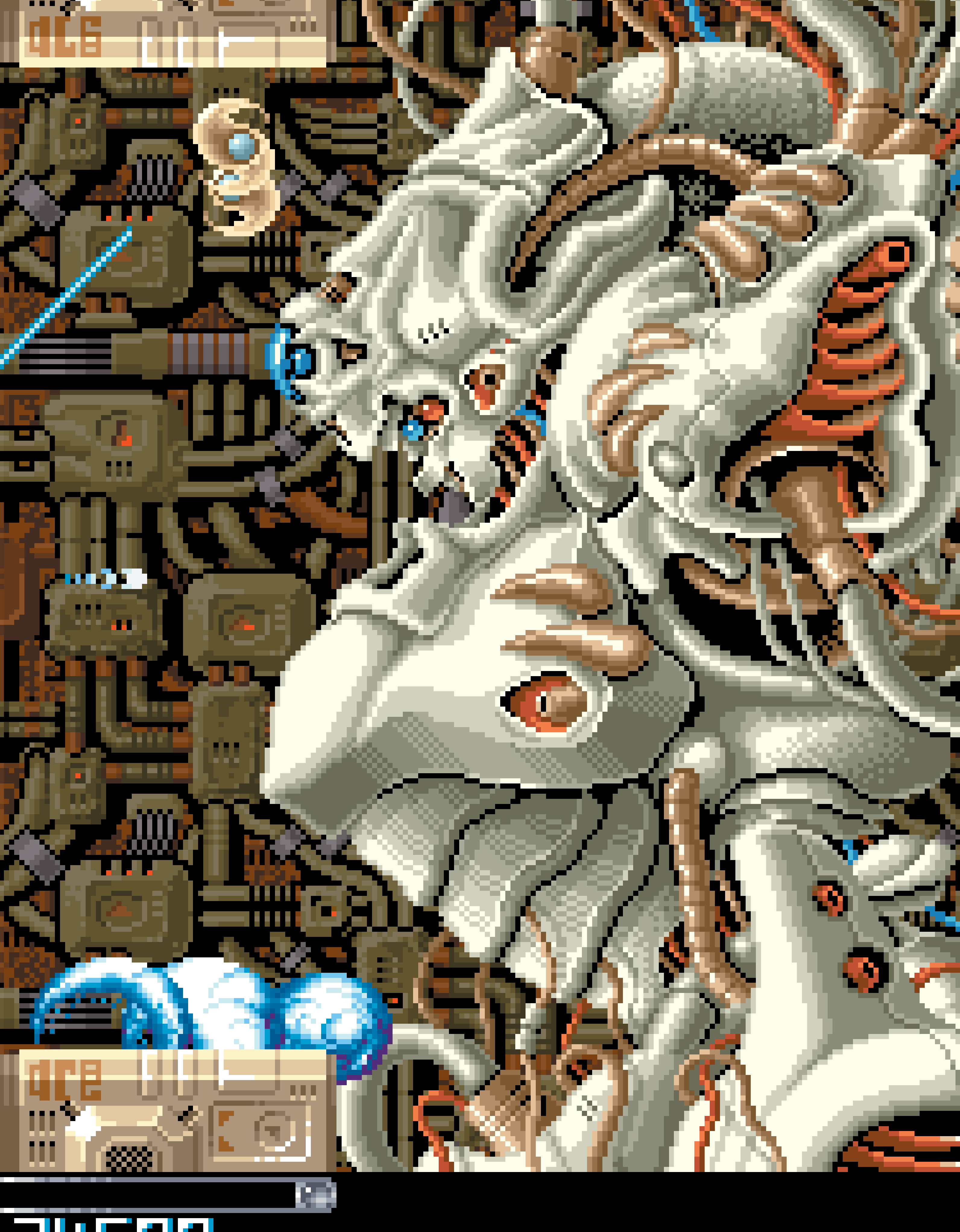
Combine the onboard view with Simulation mode for one of the hardest gaming experiences ever.

AND THEY WALKED AWAY…

Playing *Moto GP 3* on the default settings, we were struck by the arcadey handling and collisions that we were met with. Deciding to try our hands at the real thing, we quit and put the game on Simulation mode which, as the name suggests, delivered a far more challenging and realistic experience. Taking corners becomes an art form with the price of failure a high one – the ensuing hospital bills are higher still. Even over-eager acceleration on a bend will result in the bike sliding out from underneath you as you're left floundering in the middle of the track. We heartily advise owners of Namco's latest to learn the handling and courses on the normal settings before braving Simulation mode. Okay, it may take a bit longer but you'll thank us some day…



You're a big shooty robot of death, but you're out of shape **R-Type II Arcade [Irem] 1989**


74500


eMag


RETRO
MICRO GAMES A
A PARAGON PUBLICATION
NO.5 APRIL 2003
00p
ZELDA
We look back at the history of Nintendo's classic series
GANON
Why does Link's arch enemy look like a pig?
THE MERCHANDISE
Find out why The Legend Of Zelda is more than just a game
PLUS... Classic gaming ads!
ZELDA SPECIAL
NES: THE START OF SOMETHING BIG
MIYAMOTO: THE MAN BEHIND MARIO
BUYERS GUIDE
Where to find all the best bargains

April
Through the years

It's not every day that a new instalment in a legendary videogame series gets released, so we thought it was worth pushing the boat out (sorry) in honour of The Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker.

Obviously, some would argue that the GameCube is in the weakest position of the three current console formats, but we'd have to question in what context such a criticism could be levelled – with titles as strong as *Zelda* and *Metroid Prime* available exclusively for the system, we would hardly call the system 'weak'; a console is only as good as its games, after all.

Interestingly, both *Metroid* and *Zelda* are in-house products from Nintendo itself and, despite being very different from one another, each features that magical atmosphere that Nintendo seems to achieve effortlessly time and time again.

games™ Retro is a celebration of gaming through the years, and what better way to celebrate than by taking a look at how Nintendo got to where it is today – it's one of the few companies that's stood the test of time and produced some of the most poignant moments in gaming history. So join us as we remember some of Nintendo's highs (and its occasional lows) in a one-off **games™** Retro special.

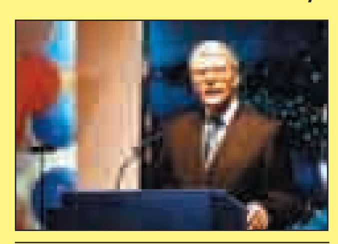
WORLD NEWS • WORLD NEWS • WORLD NEWS • WORLD NEWS

April 1980
As Nintendo launched its first Game & Watch game this month, the African republic of Zimbabwe won independence, with Robert Mugabe being elected Prime Minister. Formerly known as Rhodesia, the area had been the centre of a racial battle for many years, and the move would see the transfer of power from white settlers to black residents.

April 1989
In the same month as a legal battle over *Tetris* began between Nintendo and Tengen, 96 football fans were killed during an FA Cup semi-final match between Liverpool and Nottingham Forest at Hillsborough Stadium in Sheffield. A gate was accidentally left open, allowing hundreds to pour into a packed stand, crushing people already inside.

April 1992
As thousands of European gamers' dreams were answered with the launch of the Super Nintendo this month, the Conservative Party was re-elected in the general election. The party was led by John Major, who had taken the reins from Margaret Thatcher two years previously. Although Major had allegedly questioned his own ability to fill the role of Prime Minister, he would retain the position until 1997 when New Labour won a landslide victory.


▶ Tragedy at Hillsborough Stadium in 1989.


▶ Grey day for politics as Major wins election.

April 1993
As SNES owners got their first taste of polygons this month, a murder took place that would trigger an enquiry lasting for more than five years. On the evening of 22 April, black teenager Stephen Lawrence and his friend Duwayne Brooks were racially abused and then attacked – Lawrence was fatally stabbed. The enquiry that followed would raise serious questions regarding the police handling of the incident.

April 1996
While the N64 missed its planned launch for the third time in Japan this month, over here the Queen was trying to enjoy her seventieth birthday celebrations. Unfortunately, the evening meal that was to be held at a Thames riverside restaurant on the actual day (21 April) had to be cancelled after details were leaked to the press. To make matters worse, Princess Diana and Prince Charles were already well into their divorce proceedings, and Sarah, Duchess of York, and Prince Andrew had filed for divorce just one week previously.

this month in 1980

The Time For Playing Games Begins…

On 28 April 1980, Nintendo launched a product that would influence the future of videogames and eventually lead to the introduction of the world's most successful handheld, the Game Boy.

Designed by the late Gunpei Yokoi, Nintendo's Game & Watch system was an LCD screen in a pocket-sized plastic case. Although the technology was severely restrictive when it came to game design, the simplicity of the initial games on offer meant that the system was more than adequate.

The first game available was called *Ball* and was basically a juggling simulation using just two buttons. But from tiny acorns come mighty oaks, and over the next nine years 59 Game & Watch games would be released, including cut-down versions of *Donkey Kong* and *Zelda*. The systems themselves also became more elaborate, featuring dual screens, more impressive visuals and even detachable joypads.


▶ Is that…? Is it…? It is – it's a monkey. Result.



this month in 1989

The Building Blocks For Game Boy

Since its conception in 1985, it seemed that every console manufacturer wanted a copy of *Tetris* for their system – even Nintendo, who in March 1989 placed such a high bid for the rights to the game that all other parties were forced to pull out. However, confusion regarding various clauses in the agreement were raised by Tengen – a subsidiary of Atari that was making its own version of *Tetris* and was already in other disputes with Nintendo regarding licensing issues.

In April that year, Tengen sued Nintendo, suggesting that its NES console was in fact a computer as opposed to a videogame system – a factor that could lead to Nintendo losing its rights to the *Tetris* licence. However, Howard Lincoln (who had successfully won the Nintendo versus Universal legal battle seven years previously – see page 136 for details) immediately began researching the legalities involved, and just days later Nintendo counter-sued Tengen.

In the July of that year, the case ended in Nintendo's favour, and the company went on to sell over three million copies of *Tetris* on the NES alone.

this month in 1992

Europe Gets Super

After the worldwide success of the NES, Nintendo's next move was always going to be a difficult one – especially considering that a certain blue hedgehog was already spinning gold on SEGA's rival 16-bit console. Even so, Nintendo faced the challenge head-on, arming itself with an amazingly competent piece of hardware, support from virtually every games developer, and a selection of its own unique software brands.

Called the Super Nintendo Entertainment System (or Super Famicom in Japan), this new machine had already launched overseas and was performing well – especially in Japan, where restocks following the initial shipment of 300,000 units had to be delivered during the night to avoid being hijacked by the yakuza.

When the SNES launched in Europe in April 1992, SEGA's Mega Drive was already building a substantial user base of gamers enjoying the many arcade perfect [sic] ports that were available on the system. Although Nintendo's own adventure and puzzle brands were already well known, the company didn't have anything along the lines of *Altered Beast* or *Golden Axe*. Rather than develop its own copycat titles, Nintendo went for the jugular and signed a deal to bring Capcom's *Street Fighter II* exclusively to the system for a limited time. Nintendo's relationship with Capcom would also see the likes of *Mega Man* and *Final Fight* making their way to the system.



▶ ***Street Fighter II* came to the SNES after a canny deal with Capcom.**



▶ ***Super Mario World* helped to launch the SNES and is now a little bit of gaming history.**

After a successful launch period backed by classics such as *Super Mario World* and *F-Zero*, it was clear that the SNES was technically superior to the Mega Drive, and by the time *Street Fighter II* was available Nintendo's console was already the gamer's choice.

this month in 1993

Incoming Enemy Fighters, Prepare For Launch…

The SNES was a clever piece of hardware that included a chip allowing 2D images to be applied to a single 3D grid. The effect (which was known as Mode 7) resulted in most SNES racing games looking decidedly slicker than those on rival consoles – *F-Zero* and *Super Mario Kart* being two prime examples. However, in the months following the machine's Japanese launch, chips allowing smooth manipulation of 3D shapes known as polygons had become more readily available, and now this technology being used in the creation of arcade games.

Although titles such as SEGA's *Virtua Racing* were impressive for their time, the arcade boards running them were still too expensive for release in the home. Nevertheless, British developer Argonaut was beavering away at a cost effective alternative that would eventually be added to some SNES cartridges, allowing the manipulation of enough polygons to create a basic 3D environment. The first game to use the technology was Nintendo's *StarFox* which, despite the blandness



of the 3D imagery, still felt like a classic Nintendo game when in launched in 1993.



this month in 1996

Ultra Delays

During 1995, Nintendo launched its Midway/Rare co-developed arcade fighting game *Killer Instinct* which, according to the introduction sequence, would be 'available in your home in 1995, only on Nintendo Ultra 64'. But Nintendo's new 64-bit console wouldn't only be delayed until April 1996, but would also be renamed simply as Nintendo 64. Sadly, the console didn't manage to meet its new April launch date, instead being delayed for a further two months while Nintendo added the finishing touches to *Mario 64*.



THE LEGEND

A CLOSER LOOK

Since 1986, *The Legend Of Zelda* and its many sequels have been bringing smiles to the faces of gamers around the world. With its enchanting world of swords and sorcery, the series has found its way into the hearts of gamers of all ages and abilities. It's got action and adventure, magic and mystery, and on top of all that it's got a hero and a princess. It seems that all the ingredients are there, but only one company knows the secret recipe to bring them together and bake them into a pie that would make Mrs Miggins herself green with envy…

Along with SEGA, Namco and a handful of others, Nintendo has the rare ability to take any genre and bring something fresh and new to it. Just take a look at *Super Mario Bros.* – not only was the original game one of the finest platformers ever created, but almost every one of the sequels has been equally as monumental. *Mario 64* is a perfect example of this; not only was it the first platform game to take full advantage of polygons and 3D imagery, but it has influenced virtually every other similar game released since.

Unsurprisingly, what *Mario* has done for platform games, *Zelda* has done for RPGs. While the move from 2D to 3D was perhaps less pronounced than with *Mario* (the top-down viewpoint used in most of the *Zelda* games already allowed 360 degree movement), Nintendo made the most of real-time camera movement, with many puzzles cleverly embedded within the designs of each location. Thoughtful use of polygons also enabled the N64 to display the seemingly endless Hyrule Field, which has become one of the most memorable scenes in any *Zelda* game.

So, join us as we take a closer look at each of the *Zelda* games.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA (1986)

THE STORY

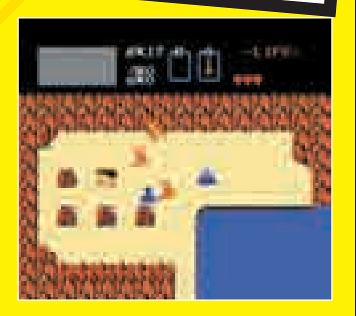
Princess Zelda has been captured by Ganon, The King Of Darkness, who has escaped from the confines of the Dark World and is trying to get his hands on the Triforce of Wisdom. However, before being snatched, Zelda managed to shatter the Triforce into eight pieces and scatter them throughout the land of Hyrule. It's up to Link to locate the eight pieces and rescue Zelda from the clutches of evil.





ABOUT THE LEGEND OF ZELDA

The Legend Of Zelda was the first NES game to use battery back-up technology that allowed you to save your position during the adventure. Coming on a shiny gold cartridge and offering groundbreaking gameplay, sales of the NES increased immensely thanks to *Legend Of Zelda*. Along with *Super Mario Bros.*, the quality of *The Legend Of Zelda* helped to sell Nintendo Entertainment Systems all around the world. In fact, *Zelda* was the first NES game to sell more than a million copies in Japan.





ZELDA II: THE ADVENTURE OF LINK (1987)

THE STORY

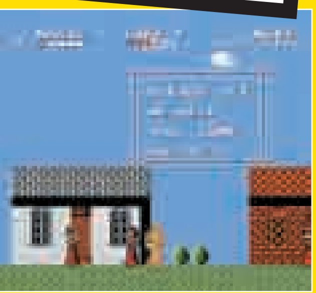
In a scenario not unlike Sleeping Beauty, a mysterious sorcerer has cast an evil spell on Princess Zelda and she has drifted into an eternal sleep. The only way to break the spell is to defeat the sorcerer, who has fled and taken sanctuary within the ruins of the Great Palace. However, the palace gates have been sealed by magic and the only way to open them is by locating shards of the Magic Crystal that lie hidden around Hyrule. Once again it's up to Link to return peace and happiness to the world. Always the way, eh?





ABOUT THE ADVENTURE OF LINK

The Legend Of Zelda had been a storming success, but even so Nintendo decided to take a slightly different approach with the sequel. Predominately, *Zelda II* was an action platform game much like *Metroid* or *Super Mario Bros.* However, there were also village sections where you had to talk to the locals in order to glean information and, while these were a little primitive, they certainly laid the foundations for what was to come. Even though a lot of the fans felt that this new instalment of *Zelda* lacked the magic of the original, it was still a commercial success.



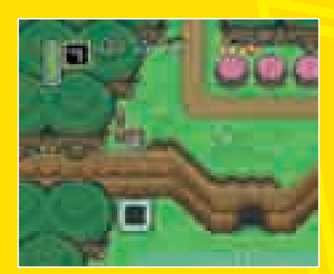
OF ZELDA

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST (1991)



THE STORY

Ganon, The King Of Darkness, has escaped from the World Of Darkness once more – this time with the help of an evil sorcerer named Agahnim. Long ago a portal to a realm known as the Golden Land was sealed by seven wise men to prevent evil from entering Hyrule. However, Agahnim has dethroned the king, kidnapped his daughter Zelda and re-opened the portal to the Golden Land. He has also captured the descendents of the seven wise men to prevent the portal from ever being closed again.



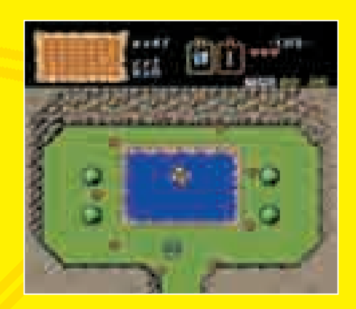
ABOUT A LINK TO THE PAST

A Link To The Past arrived at the end of 1991 to a fanfare of praise after the *Zelda* series had been absent from the world of videogames for almost four years. Several elements had been lifted from *The Adventure Of Link* and, when combined with the core structure of the original *Legend Of Zelda*, the best-loved game in the entire *Zelda* series was born. Who could forget discovering the Dark World and the many clever links that tied it to Hyrule? There were also tons of side-quests and sub-plots, and many gamers dedicated weeks or even months of their lives to completing every one. All in all, it was the consummate *Zelda* game that offered everything that fans wanted and much more.

SUPER NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

BS THE LEGEND OF ZELDA (1995)

You may have not heard of this one because it never appeared on the SNES outside of Japan – even then, you needed a whole new piece of equipment attached to your console to play it. In collaboration with Bandai, Nintendo developed a piece of technology called the Satellaview. This was a unit that plugged into your SNES and allowed you to download new games and extra content (just like Xbox Live) via a satellite television system called St GIGA. *BS Legend Of Zelda* was just one of many games available and the more perceptive of you may have noticed that it looks uncannily like the original *Zelda* game on the NES. That's because it is, though a number of the dungeons were remixed to make the experience significantly different.



PHILIPS CD-I – THE WEAKEST LINKS



After a dispute with Sony, Nintendo turned to Philips to co-develop a CD add-on for the SNES. But it soon became apparent that the device wouldn't sell and in the end all plans were cancelled. However, a contract still existed between the two companies and Philips was awarded temporary use of the *Zelda* licence on its own console as compensation. In the following three years, we saw *Link: The Faces Of Evil* (1993, CD-i), *Zelda: The Wand Of Gamelon* (1993, CD-i) and *Zelda's Adventure* (1995, CD-i) – all attempts at a *Legend Of Zelda* game that totally destroyed the essence of the series and instead introduced awful FMV sequences, some of the worst voice acting ever heard and some terrible game action.

THE MISSING LINKS

The ones that got away…

■ The Legend Of Zelda 64 (64DD)

Originally touted as a launch title for the 64DD in Japan, delays to the first N64 *Zelda* game combined with doubts that the 64DD would succeed, meant the game moved to a larger cartridge instead. This became the *Ocarina Of Time*.

■ Legend Of Zelda Gaiden (64DD)

With the switching of its first *Zelda* game onto a cartridge, Nintendo began a new title that would use the 64DD's advanced memory system. But this too was moved over onto the more sellable cartridge format and turned into *Majora's Mask*.

■ Ura-Zelda (64DD)

One game that was never transferred onto a cartridge was the add-on pack for *Ocarina Of Time*. Known only as *Ura-Zelda*, it was meant to pick up where *Ocarina Of Time* left off and lead Link on a quest for the Triforce. It was never released on the 64DD, but has now been renamed *Master Quest* and is available on a bonus disc with *The Wind Waker*.

■ Zelda: The Mystical Seed series (Game Boy Color)

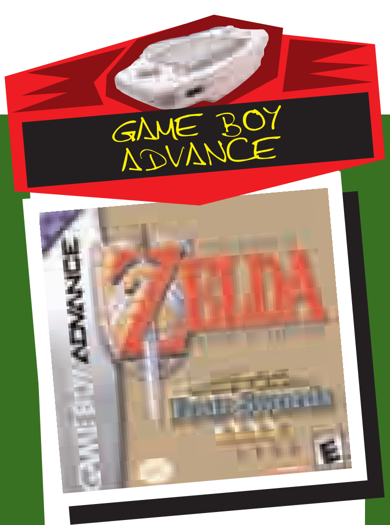
The two games from the *Zelda: Oracle* series started out as a trilogy known as the *Mystical Seed* series. Each game was named after one of the Mystical Seeds (Power, Wisdom and Courage) and contained features that allowed each game to be connected to the other two. But this system became far too complex and only two games were released.

■ The Legend Of Zelda (Game Boy Color)

This isn't actually a new title – it's merely a GBC version of the original NES *Legend Of Zelda* game. Rumour has it that one working copy of the game exists, locked deep inside Nintendo HQ. If only we could get in there somehow…

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA





THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST/FOUR SWORDS (2003)

ABOUT A LINK TO THE PAST & FOUR SWORDS

Although this is basically a remake of the classic SNES game, GBA *The Legend Of Zelda* also includes a brand new multiplayer game entitled *Four Swords*. Developed by Capcom, this clever little game revolves around co-operative play and colour co-ordination. Each player controls a different coloured Link (choose between red, blue, purple or green) and everyone needs to be vigilant if the team is to get through the five dungeons on offer. Some sections require one person to stand on a switch while the others make their way ahead, while other sections involve attacking enemies when they display the colour relating to your character. And if you can't find three friends and a four-player link cable, you can always play *A Link To The Past* instead.



LEGEND OF ZELDA: LINK'S AWAKENING DX (1998)



THE STORY

During a voyage back to Hyrule, Link is thrown overboard and finds himself shipwrecked on Koholint Island. While trying to find a way home, Link discovers that the island has many problems of its own – problems that can only be solved if he helps the natives to recover the eight Instruments of the Sirens and wake the Wind Fish.

ABOUT LINK'S AWAKENING DX

Released on the original Game Boy just two years after *A Link To The Past* on the SNES, *Link's Awakening* was the first *Zelda* title to feature Link in a completely new scenario. Neither Zelda, Ganon or the land of Hyrule appeared in it once, which was quite a brave thing for Nintendo to try. Thankfully, it all turned out rather well and the fans certainly weren't disappointed. Obviously, the game lacked the rich colour palette of the previous games (being on the Game Boy and all), though the release of the Game Boy Color in 1997 gave Nintendo the opportunity to do something about that.

Cunningly, Nintendo brought out *Legend Of Zelda: Link's Awakening DX* in 1998 with an added incentive for those gamers who had already been through the original game – a whole new dungeon to explore. On top of that, the game also supported the Game Boy Printer, allowing the user to print out special 'camera' shots that could be taken in the game. Of course, with the game being as good as it was, most fans simply enjoyed playing through it again in colour, irrespective of the neat little extras.

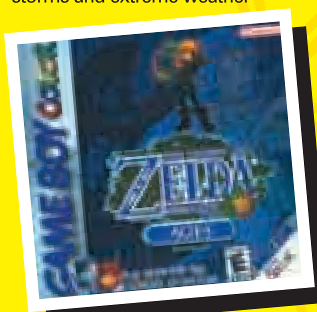


LEGEND OF ZELDA: ORACLE OF SEASONS (2001)



THE STORY

Because of a magical spell cast by a power-hungry general named Onox, the world of Holodrum has been transformed into a place where storms and extreme weather conditions make life impossible for the inhabitants. By collecting the eight Essences of Nature, Link must locate Din (the Oracle of Seasons) and strengthen the Maku Tree to bring balance back to the seasons.



LEGEND OF ZELDA: ORACLE OF AGES (2001)

THE STORY

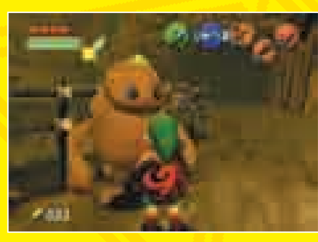
In a land known as Labrynna a sorceress named Veran has altered history using Nayru (the Oracle of Ages) and now her evil soul rules the present. Using the Triforce, Link travels to Labrynna and sets off on a journey to return the present to how it should be.

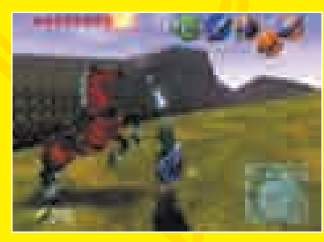
Using the Harp of Ages, Link must travel into the past and recover the eight Essences of Time before Veran can be destroyed once and for all.

ABOUT ORACLE OF AGES & ORACLE OF SEASONS

With creation of these games farmed out to Capcom Entertainment, their main feature wasn't just that they both offered totally different and huge quests, but that you could connect them together via a password system. By completing either of the games, you were awarded a password that could be entered into the other game. This would change certain elements and introduced new characters from the previous game that wouldn't normally have been there before. By combining both titles, you were essentially getting four games for the price of two – four of the best *Zelda* titles ever created too.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: OCARINA OF TIME (1998)







THE STORY

Ganon is up to his old tricks again and the only way he can be stopped is by using the powers of the Seven Sages to seal him in the Dark World forever. In order to do this, Link must travel through time and make changes in the past to affect the way the future unfolds.

However, the disappearance of Princess Zelda is an additional mystery that Link will have to solve. Only time will tell how it all slots into place.

ABOUT OCARINA OF TIME

The long-awaited release of *Ocarina Of Time* in 1998 marked a change of direction for the *Zelda* series from the realms of limiting 2D to the far more adventurous and exciting ones of 3D. Of course, there was more on the line than whether fans would like the next instalment of the franchise or not. At the time, Nintendo was in the midst of a bitter console war with Sony and, sadly, it was a war that the big N was losing quite badly. Thankfully, Nintendo didn't disappoint and eventually released not just the game that would convince more people than ever to buy an N64, but also what was to become one of the very best adventure games released on a home console (if not one of the best games ever…).

The control system was spot-on, the 3D camera was (mostly) perfect and the graphics and sound managed to convey the atmosphere of the entire *Zelda* series perfectly. There were so many little details in the rich organic world that it was easy to spend hours just exploring, fishing or galloping around the visually stunning Hyrule Field on Link's horse Epona. Superb.

NINTENDO 64

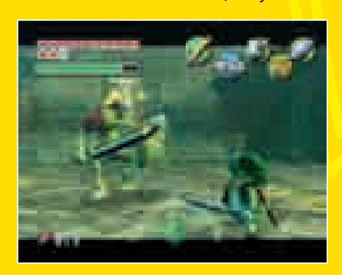
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: MAJORA'S MASK (2000)

THE STORY

Thrown into a parallel world called Termina, Link discovers a world about to be destroyed by its moon crashing to earth. With just 72 hours until armageddon, Link must work quickly if he is to save the world from certain destruction. Perhaps the dark power of a relic known as Majora's Mask has something to do with it?

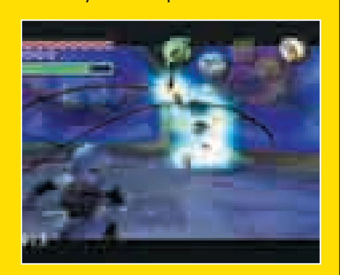
ABOUT MAJORA'S MASK

Originally revealed under the name of *Zelda Gaiden* in 1999, *Majora's Mask* was an original game rather than the follow-up to *Ocarina Of Time* as some had suspected it would be. Put together in a shorter amount of time (given that it was originally intended as an extra section to *Ocarina Of Time* before Nintendo decided to release it as a standalone game), the world of Termina was considerably smaller than the previous N64 adventure, though it wasn't necessarily a shorter game.

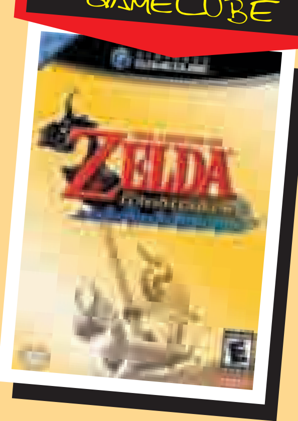




It was the inclusion of time-travel and the impending threat of destruction that lengthened the adventure considerably; with only three 'days' of playing time to experience before the game ended, it was necessary to keep travelling back in time and effectively placing yourself back where you started on a regular basis. Although the system was initially a little confusing, once you got to grips with the many nuances and little touches that made *Majora's Mask* different from *Ocarina Of Time* (such as an expanded set of sub-quests and the fact that you had to be in the right place at the right time for certain things to happen), it became clear that this really was a worthy follow-up to *Ocarina*.



GAMECUBE



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER (2003)

The latest game in the Zelda series – *The Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker* – sees Link on a colourful adventure to rescue his sister after she is abducted by a giant bird. In a world where islands lie in an enormous blue sea, the only chance he has of locating her is by setting off on an epic voyage in his sailboat. But he soon discovers other mysteries that exist out in the big wide world and he must travel between the various islands in order to solve them. Of course, a sailboat can only travel in the direction the wind is blowing and only the Wind Wand can change that…

When it was unveiled, many were disappointed with the new graphical approach Nintendo was taking with the game – especially after the very fancy-looking *Zelda Vs Ganon* demonstration that had been shown some time earlier. However, it has now become apparent that the visuals not only suit the game, but also manage to recreate the magical atmosphere that has characterised the series. Read the full review on page 98.





MAKE YOUR OWN MUSIC

You can be just like Link with your very own ocarina (sword not included)



▶ The Zelda Sweet Potato ocarina from Songbird Ocarinas is relatively easy to play. A Triforce emblem is included on the cobalt blue glaze finish.



The ocarina may have been made famous by Link and his Ocarina Of Time, but these small wind instruments are actually thought to date back 12,000 years. Various terracotta examples crafted in the shape of birds and other animals are known to have been around in India six thousand years ago, though, somewhat surprisingly, they were only introduced to Western territories in 1900. In America, they were first available through the Sears catalogue under the name 'Sweet Potato' because of their shape and sweet sound, and subsequently became extremely popular.

Relatively affordable and small enough to be worn as a pendant around the neck, ocarinas (or Sweet Potatoes, if you prefer) were, and still are, perfect instruments for children or those who have only a moderate musical ability. Although clay is the most widely used (and traditional) material for constructing ocarinas, wood, bone and more recently metal and plastic have also been used, each creating a slightly different sound. Pottery and wooden variants will usually create the softest sounds, with metal and plastic producing a slightly more shrill sound along the lines of a recorder.



▶ The Baritone Ocarina offers the second deepest sound and measures approximately nine centimetres across.



▶ The Bass Ocarina produces the lowest, richest sound of all, though the large holes mean that it isn't suitable for small fingers.

Just like other instruments, ocarinas also come in a range of pitches, going from soprano up at the top, through alto, tenor and baritone, right down to bass at the bottom. On top of that, there are also different note ranges depending on the amount of holes available, though a larger number of holes usually equates to a less user-friendly instrument.

If you're interested in buying an ocarina, you can do so at some music stores, though a bigger selection is now available from specialist manufacturers online. We found www.songbirdocarina.com to be one of the most reliable sites, offering a selection of instruments to suit any budget.

Best of all, the site offers ocarinas in the mould of the one featured in *The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time*, with a classy cobalt blue glaze finish and the Triforce emblem on the side. At $39.99 (£25.50), the Zelda Sweet Potato seems expensive at first, but considering that each instrument is made by hand and includes a mini-songbook of *Zelda* music, we think it's a real bargain.

LAST MONTH'S SNES SCREENSHOTS REVEALED

If thinking about last month's screenshots has given you sleepless nights, here's the list of every game featured. We're nice like that…

FIRST ROW
Actraiser
Aero The Acrobat
Aladdin
Alien³
Area 88
Front Mission 2: Gun Hazard
Golden Fighter
Hook
Joe & Mac 3
Joe & Mac Caveman Ninja

SECOND ROW
Beavis And Butthead
Assault Suits Valken
Axelay
Bastard!
Battletoads Vs Double Dragon
King Arthur's World
Krusty's Super Funhouse
Last Action Hero
Legend Of The Mystical Ninja
Zelda: ALTTP

THIRD ROW
Super Metroid
Biker Mice From Mars
Boxing Legends Of The Ring
BS F-Zero
BS Mario Excite Bike
Live A Live
Lost Vikings
Love Quest
Mario & Wario
Mario Paint

FOURTH ROW
Bubsy the Bobcat
Cameltry
Castlevania: Vampire's Kiss
Chaos Engine
Chrono Trigger
Mario Letters
Mickey Mania
Mickey's Magical Quest
Mortal Kombat
Mr Nutz

FIFTH ROW
Clayfighters
Cliffhanger
Contra Spirits
Darius Twin
David Crane's Amazing Tennis
Perfect Eleven Soccer
Pilotwings
Pocky & Rocky 2
Pop 'N Twinbee
Power Moves

SIXTH ROW
Dear Boys
Dino City
Donkey Kong Country
Double Dragon
Dragon's Lair
Prince Of Persia
Puyo Puyo
Ranma 1/2: Hard Battle
Rock 'N Roll Racing
Rockman Soccer

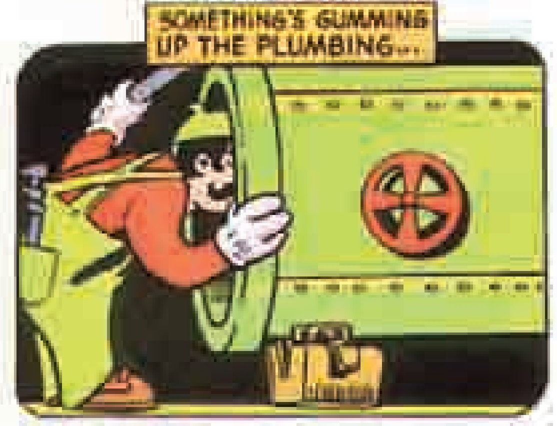
SEVENTH ROW
Dragon's Quest V
Drakkhen
Earthworm Jim 2
Exhaust Heat
Extra Innings
Run Saber
Sailormoon
Side Pocket
Sonic Blastman
Street Racer

EIGHTH ROW
Faceball 2000
Fighters History
Final Fantasy VI
Final Fight 3
Ganbare Goeman
Super Mario Kart
Super Mario World
Super Tennis
The Addams Family
Top Gear

ATARI PRESENTS MARIO BROS.

Another smash arcade hit brought home only by Atari for use with the ATARI® 2600™ Game, Sears Video Arcade† systems and versions exclusively for the ATARI 5200™ Super System.













MARIO BROS.

ATARI

*Mario Brothers by Nintendo Trade Mark and © Nintendo 1983

†Trademark of Sears, Roebuck and Co.

MARIO BROS. (Atari 2600, 5200) Mario on a non-Nintendo console? It's already happened… 1983



zelda family tree

While many of today's popular franchises have stemmed from the PSone generation, a few classics still stand their ground amongst the likes of *Crash Bandicoot* and *Tomb Raider*. The best-known ones seem to come from Nintendo – whether it's *Mario*, *Donkey Kong* or *Zelda*, Nintendo is the undisputed champion when it comes to creating long-lasting brands and characters.

Of course, it's Mario that's most synonymous with the company, though in recent years the *Zelda* franchise has received the most attention, most probably because of the noise that *Zelda: Ocarina Of Time* made when it finally launched on N64 after a delay. So which is your favourite? Take a look at the *Zelda* family tree to refresh your memory. You may even find a few titles that you didn't even know existed…

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA

1986
NES
Nintendo

Every great series has to start somewhere and for *Zelda* it was with launch of *Zelda No Densetsu* (*The Legend Of Zelda*) on Nintendo's Famicom Disk System. Because it was seen as something of a financial risk, the system never launched outside Japan – instead the game was translated to cartridge and released on the NES.

ZELDA: THE ADVENTURE OF LINK

1987
NES
Nintendo

While *The Legend Of Zelda* had laid down the foundation for almost every other *Zelda* title, the second game attempted to take the series in a slightly different direction. Rather than the typical *Zelda* viewpoint, much of this title was *Mario*-esque 2D platforming – a change that proved to be unpopular with many fans of the original.

LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST

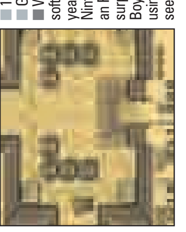


1991
SNES
Nintendo

Nintendo needed to demonstrate that the Super Famicom (Super Nintendo Entertainment System in the West) was superior, both in terms of technology and software, to SEGA's Mega Drive, and it certainly did that with the resurrection of the *Zelda* series. A huge, sprawling RPG, *Zelda: ALTTP* is considered by many to be the best game in the series.

HANDHELD

LEGEND OF ZELDA: LINK'S AWAKENING



1993
GB
Nintendo

While much of the Game Boy's initial software was fairly simplistic, a few years of using the technology had given Nintendo enough knowledge to create an RPG. *Link's Awakening* was surprisingly good considering the Game Boy's limitations – even successfully using the odd side-scrolling section as seen in *The Adventure Of Link*.

BS THE LEGEND OF ZELDA

1995
SNES
Nintendo

Based on the original NES *Zelda, BS The Legend Of Zelda* was only ever available in Japan and only on Nintendo's Satellaview – a SNES add-on that linked with a Japanese television system called GIGA and allowed users to download playable games. Sadly, Nintendo shut down the system before gamers could get the last instalments.

PHILIPS

LINK: THE FACES OF EVIL

1993
CD-i
Philips

After cancelling their agreement with Sony to create a SNES add-on, Nintendo promptly signed a similar deal with Philips. But it was soon decided that an add-on was a bad idea and this deal was also cancelled. Philips was later given temporary use of the *Zelda* franchise as compensation. Oh, how we wish it wasn't…

ZELDA: THE WAND OF GAMELON

1993
CD-i
Philips

While the title *Faces Of Evil* described how *Zelda* fans looked when they saw what Philips had done with Link, they were even more horrified when they saw how Zelda was portrayed on the CD-i. A Barbie-like heroine in a pink miniskirt may have seemed like a good idea to Philips, but for us things couldn't have got any worse… or could they?

ZELDA'S ADVENTURE

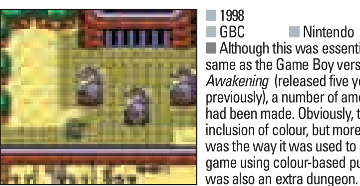



1995
CD-i
Philips

If you thought that *Faces Of Evil* and *Wand Of Gamelon* were bad then you'd have been utterly disgusted with this. Although Philips' initial *Zelda* creations featured appealing artwork like that in Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* games, *Zelda's Adventure* was realised through poorly rendered CG sprites and back-grounds, and live action cut-scenes. Ugh.

CAPCOM

LEGEND OF ZELDA: LINK'S AWAKENING DX



■ 1998
■ GBC ■ Nintendo
■ Although this was essentially the same as the Game Boy version of *Link's Awakening* (released five years previously), a number of amendments had been made. Obviously, there was the inclusion of colour, but more impressive was the way it was used to enhance the game using colour-based puzzles. There was also an extra dungeon.

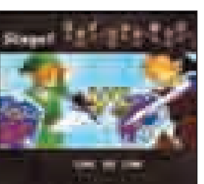
LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE OCARINA OF TIME



■ 1998
■ N64 ■ Nintendo
■ With seven years since the last big *Zelda* game, Nintendo had a lot to prove. Many things had changed during that time – including the introduction of 3D graphics – and it was unclear whether the classic *Zelda* formula would work as well as before. Thankfully, after numerous delays, the game managed to surpass almost everyone's expectations.

OTHER GENRES

SUPER SMASH BROTHERS



■ 1999
■ N64 ■ Nintendo/Hal Laboratories
■ Just like Marmite, *Super Smash Brothers* was one of those games that you either loved or hated. Either way, no-one could dispute that this was a massive success for Nintendo, partly because so many of Nintendo's favourite characters were included. As well as Mario, Donkey Kong and a range of Pokémon, Link was among the line-up.

LEGEND OF ZELDA: MAJORA'S MASK





■ 2000
■ N64 ■ Nintendo
■ Although *Majora's Mask* was overseen by *Zelda* creator Shigeru Miyamoto, much of the creative process was handled by a then new team of upcoming designers and programmers at Nintendo of Japan. This, combined with a relatively short development period, raised doubts about the game's quality, but it was great anyway.

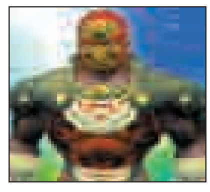
LEGEND OF ZELDA: ORACLE OF AGES

■ 2001
■ GBC ■ Nintendo/Capcom
■ Nintendo's current ties with Capcom and the *Resident Evil* series may have stemmed from *Oracle Of Ages* and *Oracle Of Seasons*, as they were both created by Capcom, rather than in-house. Sharing many similarities with *A Link To The Past*, *Oracle Of Ages* used time travel to introduce puzzles and themes as the game progressed.

LEGEND OF ZELDA: ORACLE OF SEASONS

■ 2001
■ GBC ■ Nintendo/Capcom
■ Contrary to what you may have heard, *Oracle Of Ages* and *Oracle Of Seasons* were two completely different games. While *Ages* used the theme of time travel to introduce many of its puzzles, *Seasons* used different times of the year to similar effect. By switching between Winter, Spring, Summer and Autumn, various routes and secret items were revealed.

SUPER SMASH BROTHERS MELEE



■ 2002
■ GC ■ Nintendo/Hal Laboratories
■ Aside from some very nice visuals, *Super Smash Brothers Melee* was really nothing more than an update of the N64 original. Again, there was a heavy emphasis on Pokémon (which is undoubtedly the reason that *SSBM* is still the best-selling GC game in Japan) and again Link appeared, this time with Ganondorf, Zelda and Sheik.

LEGEND OF ZELDA: LTTP/FOUR SWORDS

■ 2003
■ GBA ■ Nintendo/Capcom
■ Thanks to the versatility of the GBA, Nintendo has been able to resurrect the SNES classic *A Link To The Past*. The best part is that not only do you get a carbon copy of the original game, but you also get a brand new four-player link-up game, developed by Capcom exclusively for Game Boy Advance, in which you and three friends work co-operatively.

LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER

■ 2003
■ GC ■ Nintendo
■ Although some gamers had reservations about the cartoon imagery used in the latest *Zelda* game, few could deny that Nintendo has once again created a must-have title. While the *Zelda* series has often featured the theme of time travel, *The Wind Waker* uses the wind and the ocean as a basis for many of its puzzle and explorative elements.

SOUL CALIBUR II

■ 2003
■ GC ■ Nintendo/Namco
■ When Nintendo first demonstrated its GameCube technology, it did so with a beautifully crafted fight scene between Link and his arch rival Ganon. Although the imagery was never used in a finished Nintendo product, a rumour suggested that Namco would feature a similar rendition of Link in the 'Cube version of *Soul Calibur II*. And it was true.

SPECIFICATIONS

CPU (Central Processing Unit): Ricoh Custom 8-bit 6502 NMOS (Negative-channel Metal Oxide Semiconductor)
CPU Speed: 1.79Mhz
PPU (Picture Processing Unit): 8-bit
Memory: Main RAM (Random Access Memory): 16Kbit (2Kbyte); Video RAM: 16Kbit (2Kbyte)
Resolution: 256 x 240
Sprites: Maximum Number Of Sprites Per Line: 8; Maximum Sprite Size: 8 x 16 pixels; Minimum Sprite Size: 8 x 8 pixels
Colour: Colours Available: 52; Maximum Colours Displayed At Once: 16; Maximum Colours Per Sprite: 4
Sound: 5 Channel Mono PSG (Programmable Sound Generator)

Nintendo ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
NES VERSION

Although many regard the SNES as the greatest console ever made, we mustn't forget that without the NES, Nintendo's Super hardware may never have existed. Besides, the NES was a great little machine in its own right – not only was it great value for money, but it also boasted some of the finest games ever created.



The big year was 1983 – the year that saw the beginning of modern console gaming. Nintendo Of Japan had started developing videogames a number of years previously and president Hiroshi Yamauchi had seen the potential of Nintendo releasing its own system in the home. In fact, he'd begun making plans for the machine in 1980, when he, lead designer Masayuki Uemura and a technician first started researching the best way to create an inexpensive chipset that could outperform its rivals.

Yamauchi-san had set a target retail price of ¥9,800 (£52) and Uemura-san's initial plan to include a 16-bit processor was thrown out in favour of a more affordable 8-bit alternative. Even then, Nintendo faced problems finding a company willing to produce the chips at an affordable price – many simply couldn't afford to gamble their future on the back of a product that might be a complete flop. However, after vigorous negotiation, Yamauchi-san secured a deal with Ricoh, who even then only signed the deal because an initial order of three million pieces was made. This was an even bigger gamble for Nintendo, but then neither company could predict that more than 60 million NES units would be sold worldwide.

The NES launched in Japan in 1983 for approximately £20 more than Yamauchi-san's original plan. Even so, the Famicom (as it was known in Japan, the name being short for family computer) was extremely popular with gamers. Unfortunately, a slight flaw with the first batch of chipsets caused some games to freeze and, after much consideration, Nintendo recalled the entire first shipment. This could easily have finished Nintendo off for good, but consumers admired the way the company swiftly dealt with the issue

THE LATEST FASHION

Although most people remember the box-like grey NES that was released in the West, the Japanese Famicom looked completely different. Not only did the cartridges slot into the top (instead of the front), but the machine was smaller, flatter and coloured beige and maroon. A redesigned NES was also released in Japan and America in 1993 and was sold as a console for beginners. Bundled with *Final Fantasy 1&2*, more than one million units were shifted.



LEADER OF THE PACK

Numerous NES packs have been released over the years, though possibly the most amusing (and misguided) was the 'Original Set' which retailed in the States for $250 (£155) and included the control deck, two controllers, the Zapper light gun and the strangest item of all, ROB (Robotic Operation Buddy). This was basically a 25 centimetre high robot that did little more than stack up coloured discs according to your actions in a game called *Gyromite*, which also came packaged with the system. Also included was lightgun game *Duck Hunt* which, because of its pick up and play appeal, was decidedly more popular than *Gyromite*. Nintendo soon realised that production of ROB wasn't financially viable and quickly introduced its second pack, the 'Action Set'. This omitted ROB and *Gyromite* in favour of popular platform game *Super Mario Bros* and sold for a more affordable $200 (£125).



and in no time at all things were back on track.

Two years later, Nintendo was faced with another tricky task – launching the NES in America. Due to an enormous number of poor quality game releases during 1983, the Western videogames industry was in turmoil, with many retailers vowing never to stock videogames or consoles ever again. However, Hiroshi Yamauchi used the situation to Nintendo's advantage. By introducing the Nintendo Seal Of Quality, Nintendo was able to control what games were released on its system, while making huge profits from the licensing costs at the same time.

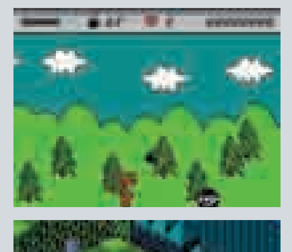
Atari had been hit hard by the crash and with its own systems and games being sold off for as little as ten per cent of the recommended retail price, the company agreed to distribute the NES in America. The deal was ready to be signed, but then a misunderstanding on Atari's part led to the contract being abandoned at the last minute. However, Nintendo soldiered on and eventually Minoru Arakawa (the then president of Nintendo Of America) managed to persuade one New York retailer to put the machine on test. The move proved to be enormously successful and a year later the NES was launched across Europe.

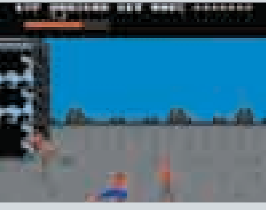
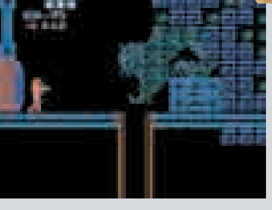


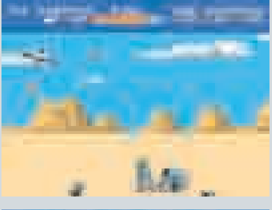
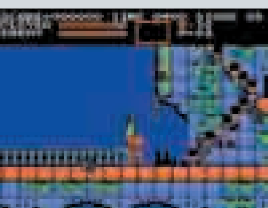
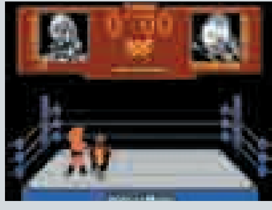
Nintendo ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

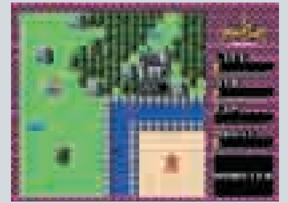
NES VERSION

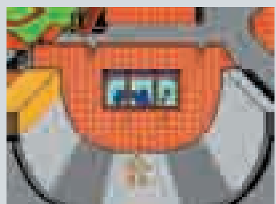
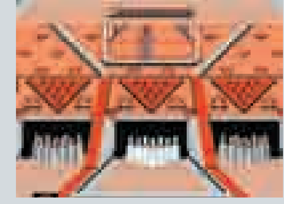
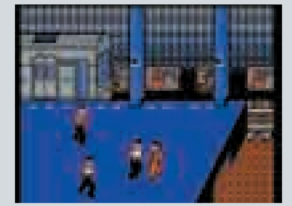
Classic Machine



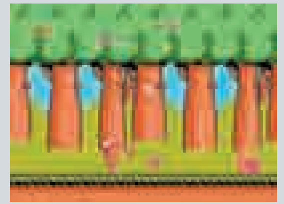



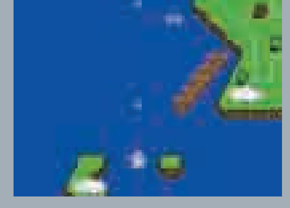





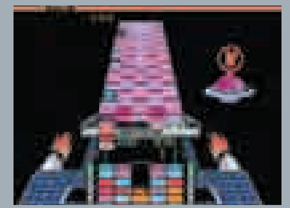


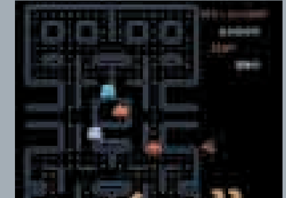
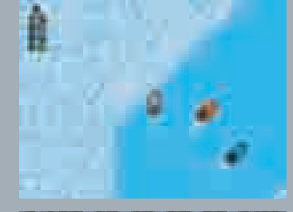





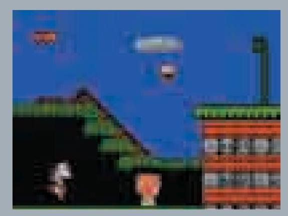
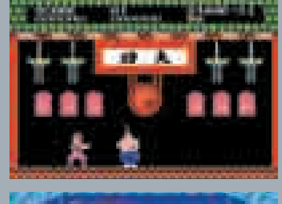
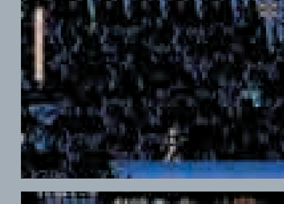




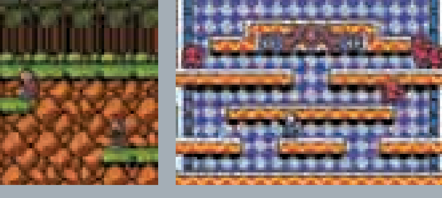




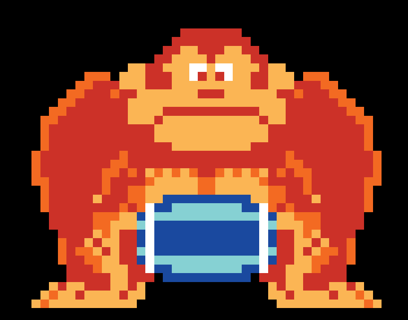






THE MAN BEHIND MARIO
SHIGERU MIYAMOTO

WHILE DEVELOPERS SUCH AS HIDEO KOJIMA AND PETER MOLYNEUX ARE NOW ENJOYING THE FAME THAT THEIR STANDOUT CREATIONS HAVE BROUGHT TO THEM, ONE MAN HAS BEEN RECOGNISED IN GAMING CIRCLES FOR MUCH LONGER…



Born in 1953 in Sonebe (a small town outside Kyoto, Japan), Shigeru Miyamoto grew up far away from the world of electronics that would later be such a prominent feature in his life. A keen musician and skilled artist, he spent much of his time exploring the countryside. His family didn't own a car or a TV, and as the nearest movie theatre was a fair distance away from his home, young Miyamoto-san would read books and draw cartoons.

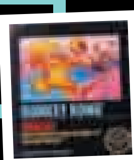
After five years of flitting between music and art, he graduated from college at the age of 24 but was still no closer to making a decision about his future. However, it just so happened that his father was friends with a man named Yamauchi Hiroshi – the CEO of a toy company called Nintendo. Yamauchi-san reluctantly agreed to interview his friend's son and Miyamoto-san was offered a job as the company's first staff artist – a position specially created to suit his skills and qualifications.

At that time, the toy industry was changing as computer technology opened up opportunities for more complex products, and in 1980, Yamauchi-san decided that a greater focus would be laid on electronic games. Miyamoto was teamed with Gunpei Yokoi to work on an arcade game featuring Popeye. Unfortunately, the Popeye licensing deal fell through, but Miyamoto continued working on the game, omitting Popeye and introducing his own characters – a barrel-throwing monkey and a little man. He called it *Donkey Kong*.

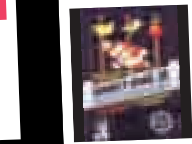
The game was a storming success and after working on a handful of lesser-known titles, Miyamoto-san was rewarded with his own development team in 1984. Called Joho Kaihatsu (or Entertainment Team), Miyamoto and his group of programmers and designers would go on to create such classics as *The Legend Of Zelda* and *Super Mario Bros*.

These days, Miyamoto takes a slightly less hands-on approach, preferring to produce rather than direct. but his creativity and input to current and past projects continues to inspire game designers in their work.

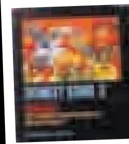
Miyamoto-san, we salute you.



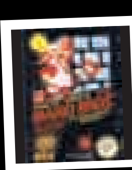
DONKEY KONG
System: NES
Development Team: Joho Kaihatsu
Released: 1983
Miyamoto-san's Role: Director



DONKEY KONG JR.
System: NES
Development Team: Joho Kaihatsu
Released: 1983
Miyamoto-san's Role: Director



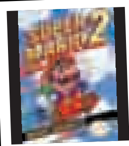
DONKEY KONG 3
System: NES
Development Team: Joho Kaihatsu
Released: 1984
Miyamoto-san's Role: Director



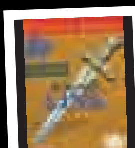
SUPER MARIO BROS.
System: NES
Development Team: Joho Kaihatsu
Released: 1985
Miyamoto-san's Role: Director



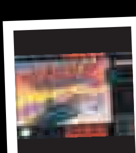
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA
System: NES
Development Team: N/A
Released: 1986
Miyamoto-san's Role: Director



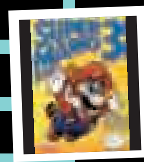
SUPER MARIO BROS. 2
System: NES
Development Team: Joho Kaihatsu
Released: 1987
Miyamoto-san's Role: Director



ZELDA II: THE ADVENTURE OF LINK
System: NES
Team: Joho Kaihatsu
Released: 1987
Miyamoto-san's Role: Director



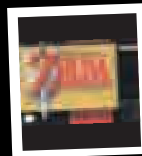
F-ZERO
System: SNES
Development Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1990/1991
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer



SUPER MARIO BROS. 3
System: NES
Development Team: N/A
Released: 1991
Miyamoto-san's Role: Director



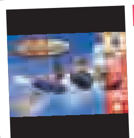
SUPER MARIO WORLD
System: SNES
Development Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1991
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer/Director



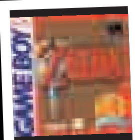
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST
System: SNES
Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1991/1992
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer/Director



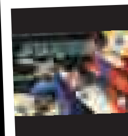
SUPER MARIO KART
System: SNES
Development Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1992
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer



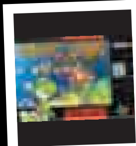
WAVE RACE
System: GB
Development Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1992
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer



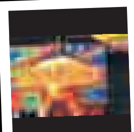
LEGEND OF ZELDA: LINK'S AWAKENING
System: GB
Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1993
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer



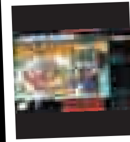
STARFOX
System: SNES
Development Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1993
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer



YOSHI'S SAFARI
System: SNES
Development Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1993
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer



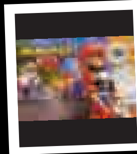
EARTHBOUND
System: SNES
Team: Hal Laboratory
Released: 1994/1995 (Japan/USA only)
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer



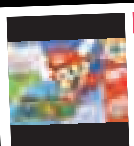
SUPER MARIO ALL STARS
System: SNES
Development Team: N/A
Released: 1995
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer/Director



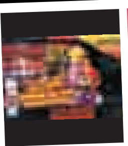
SUPER MARIO WORLD 2: YOSHI'S ISLAND
System: SNES
Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1995
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer/Director



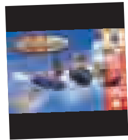
MARIO KART 64
System: N64
Development Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1996/1997
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer



SUPER MARIO 64
System: N64
Development Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1996/1997
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer/Director



SUPER MARIO RPG: LEGEND OF THE SEVEN STARS
System: SNES
Team: Nintendo EAD/Squaresoft
Released: 1996/1997 (Japan/USA only)
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer



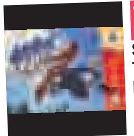
WAVERACE 64
System: N64
Development Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1996/1997
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer



STARFOX 64
System: N64
Development Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1997
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer



YOSHI'S STORY
System: N64
Development Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1997/1998
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer



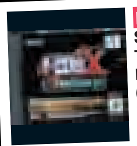
1080° SNOWBOARDING
System: N64
Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1998
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer



F-ZERO X
System: N64
Development Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1998
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: OCARINA OF TIME
System: N64
Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1998
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer/Director



F-ZERO EXPANSION KIT
System: 64DD
Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1999 (Japan only)
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer



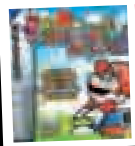
MARIO ARTIST
System: 64DD
Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1999 (Japan only)
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer/Director



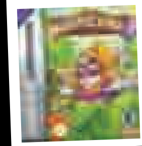
SUPER SMASH BROS.
System: N64
Development Team: Hal Laboratory
Released: 1999
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer



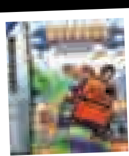
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: MAJORA'S MASK
System: N64
Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 2000/2001
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer



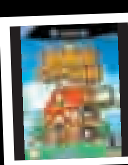
SUPER MARIO ADVANCE
System: GBA
Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 2001
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer



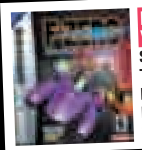
WARIO LAND 4
System: GBA
Development Team: Intelligent Systems
Released: 2001
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer



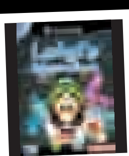
ADVANCE WARS
System: GBA
Development Team: Intelligent Systems
Released: 2001/2002
Miyamoto-san's Role: Supervisor



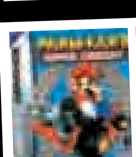
ANIMAL CROSSING
System: GC
Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 2001/2002 (Japan/USA only)
Miyamoto-san's Role: Supervisor



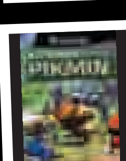
F-ZERO: MAXIMUM VELOCITY
System: GC
Team: ND Cube
Released: 2001/2002
Miyamoto-san's Role: Supervisor



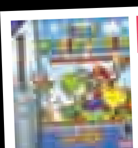
LUIGI'S MANSION
System: GC
Development Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 2001/2002
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer



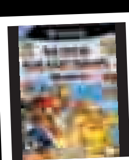
MARIO KART: SUPER CIRCUIT
System: GBA
Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 2001/2002
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer



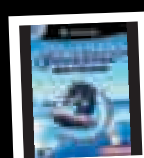
PIKMIN
System: GC
Development Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 2001/2002
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer/Director



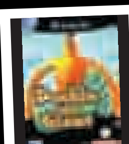
SUPER MARIO WORLD: SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 2
System: GBA
Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 2001/2002
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer



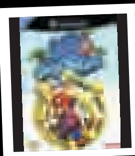
SUPER SMASH BROS. MELEE
System: GC
Team: Hal Laboratory
Released: 2001/2002
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer



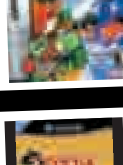
WAVE RACE BLUE STORM
System: GC
Team: NSTC
Released: 2001/2002
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer



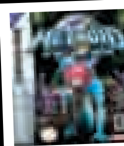
DOSHIN THE GIANT
System: GC
Development Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 2002
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer



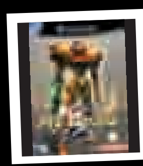
SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE
System: GC
Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 2002
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer



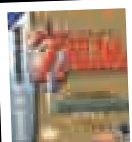
YOSHI'S ISLAND: SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 3
System: GBA
Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 2002
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer



METROID FUSION
System: GBA
Development Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 2002/2003
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer



METROID PRIME
System: GC
Development Team: Retro Studios
Released: 2002/2003
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: ALTTP/FOUR SWORDS
System: GBA
Team: Nintendo EAD/Capcom
Released: 2002/2003
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER
System: GC
Team: Nintendo EAD
Release Date: 2002/2003
Miyamoto-san's Role: Producer





PHANTOM GANON

With the new* Zelda *upon us, games™ has been reminiscing about just how great the* Zelda *series is (you may have already noticed…). All those great game characters, locations and, of course, bosses… so many great bosses in fact, that there were dozens we could have featured here. But we had to choose one and Phantom Ganon, the ghostly knight on horseback from the Forest Temple in* Ocarina Of Time*, stood out the most.

Format: **Nintendo 64**
Publisher: **Nintendo**
Developer: **In-House**
Year: **1998**

Those of you who completed *The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time* on N64 will undoubtedly remember the Forest Temple. Not only was it the largest 'dungeon' in the game, but it was also the most complex, featuring an enormous range of location-based puzzles and maze-like twisting corridors. After around an hour of exploring the temple's dank underground tunnels and elevated towers, the last thing Link needed was to come face to face with his arch enemy, but that was just what happened. Well, sort of.

Rather than facing the real Ganon, this was merely Ganondorf, the King of Thieves in phantom form – capable of passing through walls and sending blasts of psychic energy at any unsuspecting Hyrulian.

In a room full of paintings, it was difficult to know exactly which direction Phantom Ganon would attack from. Only by keeping an eye out for movement was it possible to pinpoint his exact location and stun him with either an arrow or a quick jab from Link's grappling hook as the apparition emerged on horseback from one of the pictures.

After a few successful hits, he was unseated from his horse and the second wave of attacks began. In an event not unlike a game of tennis, Ganon began thrusting bolts of pure energy towards you – bolts of energy that could cunningly be knocked back towards him with a well-timed slash of Link's sword.

After a few successful returns, Phantom Ganon was destroyed and yet another classic gaming moment was added to Nintendo's ever-growing list.

GANON OR GANONDORF?

Although most gamers simply refer to Link's arch enemy as Ganon, the numerous different spellings and versions of the name are likely to confuse even the most hard-core *Zelda* fans. According to Nintendo, Ganon started life as a regular human being called Ganondorf Dragmire.

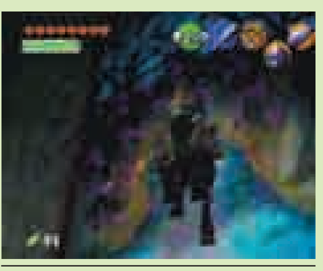
As the only male ever born into the Gerudo clan (a group of thieves consisting only of women), Ganondorf became King of Thieves, leading the Gerudo into battle for control over Hyrule. However, Ganondorf was an evil man who cared only for himself, and this hatred eventually consumed him.

Without the Moon Pearl to protect him from the effects of the Dark Realm though, Ganondorf was transformed into Ganon, a pig-like demon and shadow of his former self. However, Phantom Ganon confuses us a little as his visual form is that of Ganondorf, though he's referred to as 'Phantom Ganon'. Any ideas? Answers on a postcard please…

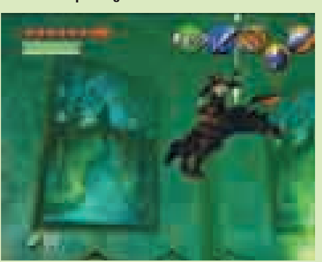




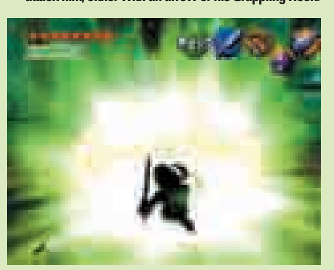
▶ Link enters a dark room, filled with paintings of a quiet country lane.



▶ After an eerie silence Phantom Ganon appears within one of the paintings.



▶ As he bursts through the canvas Link gets a chance to attack him, either with an arrow or his Grappling Hook.

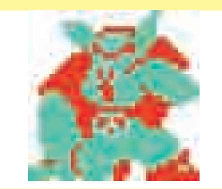


▶ After a few hits, Phantom Ganon begins to fire orbs of energy at Link and the game of tennis begins.

FROM HUMBLE BEGININGS

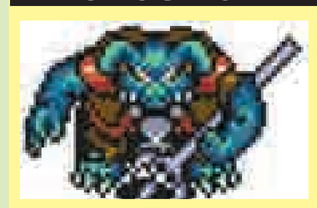
Ganon looks mighty impressive in the latest* Zelda *games but, like so many of our favourite characters, he started off as a simple sprite…

NES GANON



With only four colours per sprite, NES Ganon was a simple affair. Inoffensive as he looked though, the Triforce of Wisdom gave him great powers, including the ability to turn invisible. Only one of Link's silver arrows could destroy this hideous creature and banish its spirit to the Dark Realm.

SNES GANON



Although more colourful (and a little more scary), SNES Ganon fought in much the same way as the original. This time armed with a Trident and some fire-based magical abilities, Ganon again used invisibility to avoid attacks, but still hated silver arrows.

Introducing a winning combination for breakfast.



Introducing the Nintendo® Cereal System™
brand sweetened cereal

Nintendo is for breakfast now. Nintendo is two cereals in one. Wow! Super Mario Bros.® and Zelda,™ too. Mix 'em, match 'em, crunch 'em, you just can't lose!

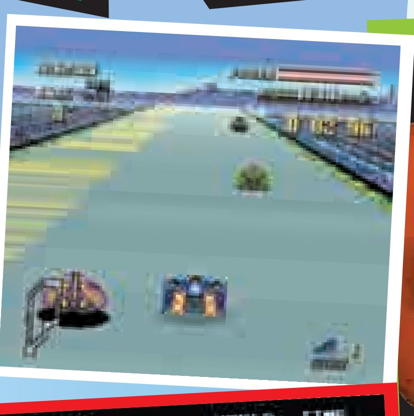
Fruit-flavored Marios, Mushrooms and Goombas. Berry-flavored Links, Hearts and Shields. Nintendo is breakfast news!

Nintendo Cereal System.

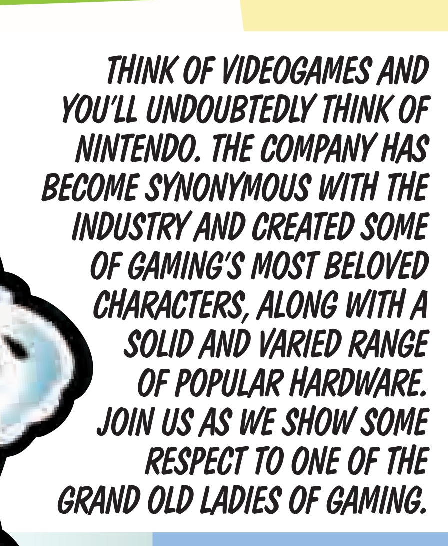
If you can't beat'em, eat'em.

NINTENDO CEREAL SYSTEM (Ralston Purina Company, 1989) Two tasty cereals for just $2.79. Bonus!





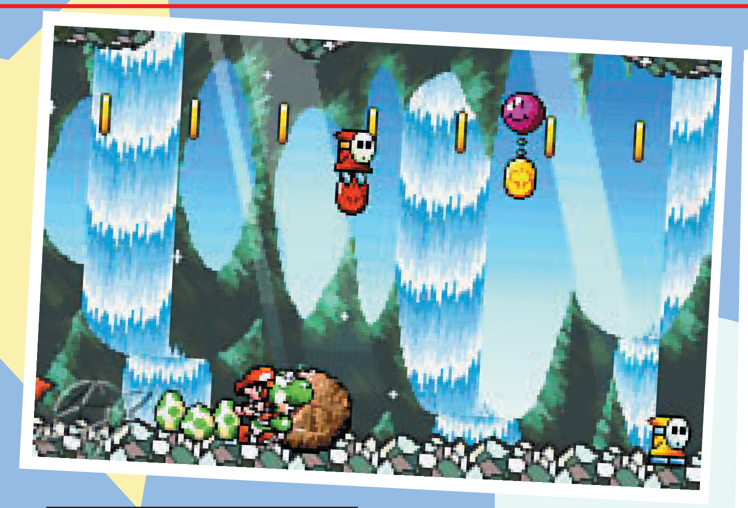



THINK OF VIDEOGAMES AND YOU'LL UNDOUBTEDLY THINK OF NINTENDO. THE COMPANY HAS BECOME SYNONYMOUS WITH THE INDUSTRY AND CREATED SOME OF GAMING'S MOST BELOVED CHARACTERS, ALONG WITH A SOLID AND VARIED RANGE OF POPULAR HARDWARE. JOIN US AS WE SHOW SOME RESPECT TO ONE OF THE GRAND OLD LADIES OF GAMING.

Founded in 1889 by Fusajiro Yamauchi (the great-grandfather of recent president Hiroshi Yamauchi), Nintendo began life as the Marufuku Company. It manufactured Japanese-style playing cards called hanafuda but, with the videogame market being rather slow until the 1970s, it didn't break into electronics for several decades… The firm became Nintendo Co Ltd in 1963 – a renaming (one of several) that enabled it to test other ideas, instant rice and 'love hotels' being two of their rather less successful ventures.

The early Seventies saw Nintendo continuing to branch out into new markets. Head designer Gunpei Yokoi (now sadly deceased) created the





Yoshi's Island is just one of many successful Mario spin-off games.

company's first commercial toy, the aptly named Ultra Hand. Whilst simple in execution (press a button to close a set of simple mechanical fingers) it proved to be a huge hit and sold extremely well. Delighted with its new-found success, Nintendo soon began creating other simple toys for a hungry new market.

The next big hit came in the form of the Beam Gun – an early light gun that would enable children to knock over various targets by simply shooting at them. The Gun used solar cells to detect light and was created by Masayuki Uemura (more on him later). The substantial profits created by these products enabled Nintendo to build massive new toy factories and break onto the first tier of the Osaka Stock Exchange. However, toys alone would not be enough for the rapidly growing company, and before long Hiroshi Yamauchi was setting his sights a little higher.

Big Shots

Continuing its relationship with Sharp (co-creators of the Beam Gun technology), Nintendo soon found a new way to enhance the longevity of its product. Skeet shooting was a popular pastime in Japan and after a few lightgun modifications (and some inspired use of abandoned bowling alleys) laser clay-shooting ranges started to spring up all over Japan – voilà, Nintendo had yet another hit on its hands. A later variation of the gun game was created in 1974 and used 16mm film along with a large projection system. Entitled *The Wild Gunman*, it involved the player shooting various gunmen as they appeared in an abandoned alley.

The next leg of the Nintendo journey came about after Yamauchi-san had dined with an old friend (now an executive in one of Japan's largest electronic firms) and discussed the breakthrough microprocessors had made. A little research into the American market showed that Atari and Magnavox sold machines that enabled you to link up to your television and play simple games.

Yamauchi-san soon negotiated a licence with Magnavox and Nintendo started to manufacture and sell the Odyssey videogames system in Japan. Knowing that they did not have the resources to create their own machines, Nintendo soon teamed up with Mitsubishi electrics and created the Colour TV Game 6 – six variations of light tennis based on the popular arcade game *Pong*. It was later succeeded by the Colour TV Game 15.

NINTENDO WHO'S WHO



Minoru Arakawa

Arakawa-san was the driving force behind the NES's success in America. He became president of Nintendo of America in 1979, eventually retiring after 22 years later in 2001.



Hiroshi Yamauchi

The great grandson of the company's founder, Yamauchi-san took office in 1950 and Nintendo soon went from strength to strength. Satura Iwata eventually succeeded him in 2002.



Shigeru Miyamoto

Creator of *Mario*, *Donkey Kong*, *Zelda* and a host of other popular franchises, Miyamoto-san is Nintendo's golden goose – and he keeps on laying eggs of gaming goodness. See page 146 for more.



Gunpei Yokoi

Legendary inventor of numerous Nintendo products (as well as creating *Metroid*) Yokoi-san left Nintendo in 1996 to form his own toy company. Sadly, he was killed in a car accident in 1997.

NOT FORGETTING…

Masayuki Uemura – creator of the NES and SNES
Howard Lincoln – Corporate lawyer and later chairman of Nintendo of America
Satura Iwata – current president of Nintendo

From humble beginnings

Hanafuda was first introduced into Japan in the 16th Century. The cards were adorned with stylish fauna and flora and were much stiffer than Western cards as they were lacquered.

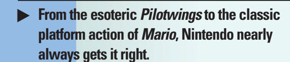
After an initially slow start Yamauchi-san's cards soon became very popular with gamblers, and the yakuza (Japanese mafia) soon started using them in their high stakes games. Demand became so high (gamblers would insist on a new untainted deck for each game) that apprentices were soon hired to keep up with demand.



Nintendo began life as the Marufuku Company, making high-quality playing cards. What with videogaming not being a popular pastime in 1889, the company would have to bide its time before launching the NES…

HISTORY OF NINTENDO





▶ From the esoteric *Pilotwings* to the classic platform action of *Mario*, Nintendo nearly always gets it right.

King Kong

Excited by this new technology, Yokoi-san developed another machine in the early Eighties. Inspired by the booming calculator industry yet wanting to put his own spin on it, Yokoi-San designed the Game & Watch. Simple and elegant, the Game & Watch used an LCD display and came with a built-in alarm – this was the forerunner of the Game Boy. The machine was very popular and soon came in several varieties with later games like *Donkey Kong* seeing the action take place over two screens.

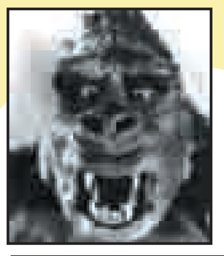
Yamauchi-san also wanted to break into the rapidly growing arcade market and sent several of his engineers off to develop new arcade games after their shooting game *Radar Scope* (amongst others) failed to make an impact. Shigeru Miyamoto, a new staff artist, was asked to come up with a game to replace the *Radar Scope* boards. After talking with the company's hardware and software engineers he went back to the drawing board and came up with *Donkey Kong*. The game's premise – rescue girlfriend from angry, barrel-throwing ape – enthralled gamers around the world, and with the creation of hero Mario (originally called Jump Man) Miyamoto-san cemented Nintendo's reputation within the industry.

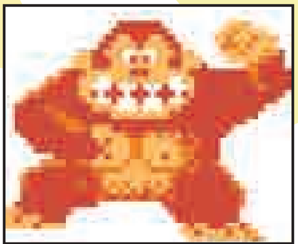
The Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) – Nintendo's first solo foray into the home console market – was an undisputed success and shifted huge numbers, despite being encumbered with the Robotic Operating Buddy (see page 142 for more details). Forever innovating, Yokoi-san's next creation was the Game Boy. It was a return to his popular handheld games of old but with one important difference – the Game Boy could use interchangeable cartridges. Whilst technically inferior to Atari's Lynx and SEGA's Game Gear (it had a monochrome display and no backlight), its superior battery life and games like *Tetris* and *Super Mario Land* ensured its success.

Eventually a colour version was made and Nintendo continued to keep a vice-like grip on the handheld market. In fact, the Game Boy has gone on to become the most successful console of all time and has now been replaced by the Game

NINTENDO VS UNIVERSAL

With Atari and Coleco purchasing the rights to sell *Donkey Kong* systems and software, it wasn't long before Nintendo's success caught the eye of Universal. Threatening to sue both Coleco and Nintendo for infringing the copyright on its 1929 film *King Kong*, things weren't looking too good. Enter Nintendo's corporate lawyer Howard Lincoln. Attending a meeting with Universal president Sid Sheinberg, Lincoln said that Nintendo would not settle (Coleco already had) and that Nintendo did not believe that Universal owned the rights to *King Kong* in the first place. An enraged Sheinberg sued Nintendo in 1982 and promptly lost – Nintendo won $1.8million.



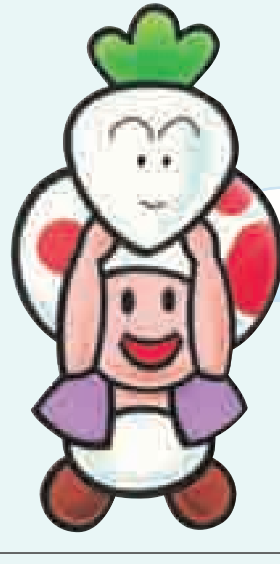


▶ *Donkey Kong King Kong*. Can you tell the difference? Universal couldn't.









▶ Daisy, Luigi, Mario and Toad have become some of the most recognisable game characters of all time.



Boy Advance and Game Boy Advance SP.

Nintendo's next machine, the Super Nintendo Entertainment System (SNES), launched in Japan in 1990. It was an immediate success, with the first batch selling out in three days. Seen by Nintendo as a superior alternative to its humble NES – not to mention a rival to SEGA's Mega Drive – the SNES, like its predecessors, launched with a new *Mario* title – in this case *Super Mario World*.

The machine was capable of some impressive pseudo-3D effects (called Mode 7) and quickly added the feature to many of its games. This impressive graphical trickery along with an amazing sound chip ensured that Nintendo owners really had something to crow about whenever their Mega Drive-owning friends came round. An aggressive market strategy by SEGA also ensured that the console wars had begun in earnest – but you know about those already…

The Future

By the time the Nintendo 64 entered the market it already had rivals in the shape of SEGA's Saturn and Sony's PlayStation – the fact that Nintendo had decided to stick with its trusted cartridge system rather than the CD format of its peers meant that it didn't enjoy the same third-party support as its predecessor. Even so, this didn't stop it from hosting some of the most popular games of all time – the likes of *Mario 64* (another launch title), *GoldenEye*, *The Ocarina Of Time* and *Lylat Wars* ensured the machine still managed to find its place in a very different gaming environment.

With Sony leading the games market from the late Nineties onwards, Nintendo knew it would need to come up with something special to go up against the PlayStation2. Although Nintendo had the handheld market well and truly sewn up thanks to its massively successful *Pokémon* franchise, it had lost a lot of ground in the home market.

With its current machine coming out after the Playstation2 and Microsoft's Xbox, Nintendo was getting fully prepared for another big showdown. The result? We'll let you know in a few years time.

NINTENDO NOW AND THEN

(All release dates are for the UK)

GAME & WATCH



Doing exactly what it said on the tin, the Game & Watch was Yokoi-san's first attempt at a portable machine and became a great success. While the games were simple affairs, they were extremely popular and can now be found in various Game & Watch galleries on the Game Boy.



GAME BOY (CLASSIC, COLOR, POCKET)

Nintendo's most popular console by far, the Game Boy was released in 1989 and has dominated the handheld scene ever since. An improved model (Game Boy Pocket) requiring less batteries and looking a lot sleeker was later released in 1996 which, in turn, was replaced by a colour version in 1998.

NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

Nintendo's first console, the NES was designed by Masayuki Uemura and launched in 1986 with 20 software tiles. The machine came with two joypads, a zapper gun, ROB the robot and the games *Duck Hunt* and *Super Mario Bros*.



NINTENDO 64

With a delayed launch and lack of support from third parties, the N64 had a pretty rough time when it appeared in 1996. Nintendo soldiered on, however, and took the approach of quality over quantity – the end result was some superb triple-A titles.





NINTENDO VIRTUAL BOY SYSTEM

Yokoi-san didn't always get it right and the Virtual Boy was a blip on an impressive CV. The idea behind the system was to take portable gaming into 3D. Sadly, the Virtual Boy proved to be very unpopular with gamers and never made it to European shores.

GAME BOY ADVANCE

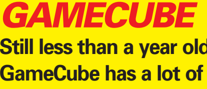
The Advance has proved a popular replacement for the long-running Game Boy. It has already made itself very popular with retro gamers due to the sheer amount of SNES conversions it hosts.



SUPER NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

Another creation from Uemura-san, the SNES is arguably Nintendo's most popular games machine. Its range of software was second to none and included the likes of *Yoshi's Island*, *Super Contra 3* and *A Link To The Past*. Later games were fitted with the Super FX chip that enabled the likes of *Starwing* to use a limited number of polygons.





NINTENDO GAMECUBE

Still less than a year old, the GameCube has a lot of ground to make up if it wants to recapture the glory days of the NES. Although software support is rather thin at the moment, 2003 promises some truly killer apps.

ZELDA'S ORACLE OF ELEMENTS

FIND OUT WHY THE LEGEND OF ZELDA IS SO MUCH MORE THAN JUST A VIDEOGAME SERIES

Although many people view merchandising as a mere cash-in designed to take advantage of the innocent consumer, its presence in the grand scheme of things is actually a little more important.

You see, creating a game such as *Zelda* costs many thousands of pounds and it often takes years to complete, making it an incredibly risky process for the developer. Because of the increasing costs of videogame creation, the level of profit generated is often purely down to whether or not the title meets its sales targets. Missed projections can often result in a decent game series being dumped by its publishers, and in the worst cases can be the nail in the coffin for smaller development houses.

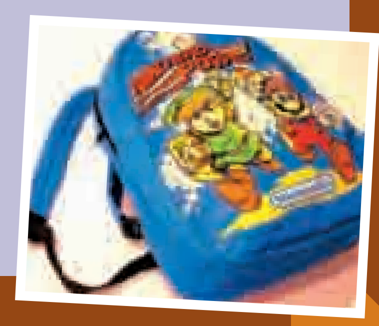
However, by producing collectable items, developers can build up a little more capital with which to fund future projects. Take *Mario 64*, for example – Nintendo took years building a competent graphics engine and perfecting the analogue control of the character. This sort of research and development simply wouldn't have been an option if Nintendo hadn't have had significant funds in its bank account – significant funds that were partially due to the sale of merchandise.

Sometimes companies also use these funds to explore new avenues that are later discarded, such as the UK version of *Hey You, Pikachu!* which was never released because of the many different dialects the voice recognition software needed to understand. Of course, Nintendo learned a lot from its research and the system may be used for something else a little further down the line.

Now that you know a bit about why merchandising is important (as if you didn't already), join us as we take a look at some the best (and worst) examples of it, *Zelda* stylee. Some of what you see may upset you…

ZELDA FASHION

You may be under the impression that people don't wear videogame-related clothes and accessories (other than those Atari logo t-shirts that every trendy Hoxtonite seems to have), but you'd be very much mistaken – a few of us really are that sad. In fact, Nintendo was happy keep a constant supply of geeky accessories flowing throughout the Eighties and Nineties with the regular release of *Zelda* fashion goodness. Although a few items were moderately tasteful and relatively understated, others were sheer monstrosities, such as this garish rucksack.



TRINKETS

There have been many different gimmicky *Zelda* items released over the years, varying in quality from rubbish to rather nice. Although these trinkets date back as far as the original NES game, recent years have seen an increase in quantity as videogames have become more mainstream.

Right now you can still get hold of collectable bendable keychains of Link for less than a fiver, though at eight centimetres high and with a detachable shield they're not particularly practical. Then again, most collectors would never remove them from the packaging anyway.



ZELDA TOYS



There have been so many Nintendo toys released over the years that it's utterly impossible to list them all here. As you'd expect, the quality varies enormously, though most of the more recent ones have been fairly robust.

A number of toy manufacturers are still producing *Zelda* figures today, including Epoch, Toybiz and Joyride Studios – all of which have a decent level of quality control. Prices currently range from \$12 (£7.65) right up to \$35 (£22.40), depending on the size and finish of the model, and you can buy them online with relative ease.

Aside from these 'collectable' figures, many other *Zelda* toys have also come and gone, including a collection of five *Zelda* Beanies (funnily enough, these were released to coincide with the Beanie Baby craze a couple of years ago). Unfortunately, while these eight-inch high cuddly renditions of Link (two different types were available), Zelda, Ganondorf and Darunia looked to be good quality, the glue wasn't particularly strong and smaller details would regularly become detached from the main bit of the body.

GAME & WATCH





Released in 1989, this *Zelda* spin-off bore little resemblance to any of the console versions of the game, though it was still considered to be one of the better Game & Watch games. Viewed on two screens, the aim of the game was simply to destroy a goblin while avoiding his attacks, as well as those of numerous other enemies that were placed strategically around the screen. Link would eventually make his way upwards until he faced a huge dragon – something that was most impressive considering the limited technology on offer.

Just like the Game Boy Advance SP (and every other Game & Watch game), *Zelda* Game & Watch folded into a neat pocket-sized rectangle, with the screens safely hidden inside. Boxed and in good condition, *Zelda* Game & Watch is currently worth around £30.

EAT YOUR GREENS

Created by Peter Pan (the toy manufacturer, not the JM Barrie character), this rather tasteful dinner set was suitable for girls and boys of all ages, or so the box says. Presumably, the reward of seeing a rather nasty piece of Link artwork was supposed to be enough to bribe little Jimmy into eating all his dinner (well, it might have worked). Strangely enough, the box featured a child looking positively joyous and holding a NES controller, though we suspect dinner times were decidedly less happy occasions when little Jimmy was dragged away from his NES, kicking and screaming. Oh well, at least the quality of the dinner set was fairly good.



ZELDA SYMPHONY



Numerous *Zelda* soundtracks have been released over the years, featuring the music from the NES, SNES and N64 games. Created by Koji Kondo, the *Zelda* tunes have been amongst the most memorable RPG compositions ever released and no CD soundtrack demonstrates the quality of workmanship better than the *Zelda Symphony*.

Featuring 13 tracks from *The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time*, *Zelda Symphony* has been specially arranged by Ryuichi Katsumata and played by the Tokyo City Philharmonic Orchestra. While the N64 interpretations of the songs were certainly competent (especially considering the limitations upon the sound programmers) the inclusion of real instruments elevates Kondo-san's work beyond all belief. Interestingly, this is one of the few pieces of *Zelda* merchandise that wouldn't have been particularly profitable for Nintendo.



OCARINA OF TIME

Various *Zelda* watches have been used both as promotion materials and for merchandising. Although many of these were simply regular watches featuring *Zelda* artwork, the *Zelda* Game Watch released in 1989 was more a videogame than a watch. While this initially looks similar to the *Zelda* Game & Watch (also released in 1989), the size of the unit and power of the technology meant that the game was very limited indeed.



▶ Can't find *Ocarina of Time?* Never mind, have a flimsy plastic wristwatch of time instead. It's just as good. Honest.

ANOTHER ROLL OF THE DICE

In 1988 Nintendo signed a deal with Milton Bradley (MB) to turn some of its most popular franchises into board games. As an RPG adventure, *The Legend of Zelda* was the perfect videogame to translate across – indeed Link, Zelda, Ganon and many other favourites characters were included, while the board itself was split into six distinctive areas. Even so, *Zelda* fans felt that the game lacked that special spark and, with little support from consumers, *The Legend Of Zelda* board game soon disappeared. If you're interested in getting a copy however, the game regularly appears on eBay at affordable prices.



▶ Some of the original *Zelda* magic managed to somehow get lost in the transition from videogame to board game. Funny that…



STARTING NEXT MONTH ONLY IN GAMES™... GBAY

Remember how all your favourite old magazines had those pages in the back that listed games that other readers were selling? You never bought any, right? Even so, it was always an interesting place to have a nose at what other gamers were getting rid of. Now you can relive those days (and perhaps even get your hands on a few choice retro games in the process) with the introduction of gBay – the games™ private retro sales section.

SELLING

To sell items on gBay, simply list the following details in an email to: gbay@paragon.co.uk

- Your name
- Your age (you must be over 18)
- Your home address and telephone number (don't worry – this is strictly confidential and will not be given out)
- Your email address
- The item(s) you wish to sell (a maximum of five per month please)
- The condition of the item(s) you wish to sell
- How much you want for the item(s)

Each item will then be allocated a lot number and listed on gBay, along with your region in the UK.

BUYING

To buy an item from gBay, all you have to do is list the following details in an email to: gbay@paragon.co.uk

- Your name
- Your age (you must be over 18)
- Your home address and telephone number (don't worry – this is strictly confidential and will not be given out)
- Your email address
- The reference number for the item you're interested in

Your email address will then be passed onto the relevant seller, who will contact you directly to complete the deal, arrange payment and make plans for postage, collection or delivery. Please note that this runs purely on a first come, first served basis.

GBAY RULES AND SMALL PRINT

This is a service for private sellers, not dealers. gBay is for sales of retro games only – no post-Dreamcast consoles or games allowed. There's little point in advertising Mega Drive *FIFA* games as everybody already has at least two copies. Paragon Publishing Ltd cannot take any responsibility for items lost or broken in the post

C·L·A·S·S·I·C C·O·N·S·O·L·E·S B·U·Y·E·R·S G·U·I·D·E

I'D BUY THAT FOR A DOLLAR

This is a basic list of the sort of prices you can expect to pay for the more popular retro gaming systems. Obviously, these can vary wildly but these prices are intended to be a rough guideline so you can tell if you're getting a bargain or being unscrupulously fleeced.

3DO

Panasonic 3DO	£60
Goldstar 3DO	£50-60

ACORN COMPUTERS

BBC Micro	£50
Acorn Electron	£40

AMSTRAD

Amstrad CPC 464	£20
Amstrad CPC 664	£20-25
Amstrad CPC 6128	£25
Amstrad GX4000	£50

ATARI

Atari VCS 2600	£30 (wooden models tend to cost more)
Atari ST	£40 (with software)
Atari Lynx	£35 (the original model costs less)
Atari Jaguar	£25

COMMODORE

Commodore Vic 20	£15-20
Commodore 64	£25-35 (varies according to model)
Commodore Amiga	£35-40 (varies according to model)
Commodore CDTV	£50-60
C64GS	£50 (becoming more sought-after)
Commodore CD32	£35

MISC

GCE Vectrex (General Consumer Electronics)	£200-250
MB Vectrex (Milton Bradley)	£175-200
JAMMA compatible cabinets	£100-350 (depending on model)
Supergun	£150-200 (varies according to model)

NEC

PC Engine	£70-80
Turbo Grafx-16	£50-60
Turbo Duo	£100-150
PC Engine GT	£150-200
Super Grafx	£200-250

NINTENDO

Game & Watch	£15-50 (depending on title)
Nintendo Entertainment System	£15-20
Game Boy/Game Boy Pocket	£10
Game Boy Color	£15
Super Nintendo	£20-25
Virtual Boy	£75-100
Nintendo 64	£20-25

SEGA

Master System	£20
Mega Drive	£20-25
Game Gear	£35-40
Mega CD	£40-60
SEGA 32X	£30
SEGA Nomad	£75-100
SEGA Saturn	£30
Dreamcast	£25-30

SINCLAIR

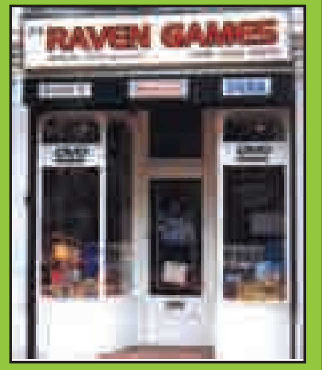
Sinclair ZX-81	£40
ZX Spectrum 48K	£40-50
ZX Spectrum +	£30
ZX Spectrum 128K	£40
ZX Spectrum +2	£35
ZX Spectrum +3	£40

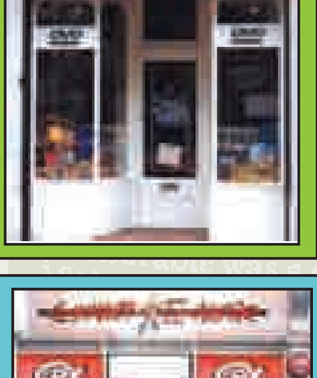
SNK

Neo Geo MVS Single Slot (Arcade system)	£70 (prices for multi-slots are higher)
Neo Geo AES (home system)	£175-225
Neo Geo CD	£125-175
Neo Geo CDZ	£150-175
Neo Geo Pocket Color	£40-50

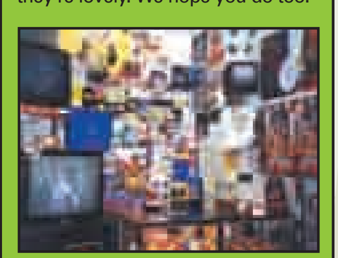
S·P·E·C·I·A·L·I·S·T R·E·T·A·I·L·E·R·S

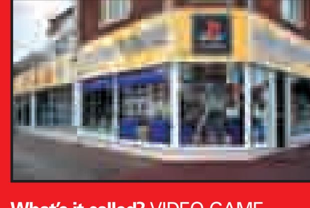
LOOKING FOR SOMETHING A BIT DIFFERENT? TRYING TO GET HOLD OF THAT JAPANESE VERSION OF HORACE GOES SKIING? YOU'LL NEED TO CHECK OUT SOME OF OUR FAVOURITE STORES THEN…





What's it called? RAVEN GAMES
Where can I find it? South of London in a little place called Beckenham.
Web Address: www.ravengames.co.uk
What can I buy there? Although it's only an ickle shop, Raven Games is something of a Tardis once you step inside. This Aladdin's cave of goodies stocks a selection of rare Japanese gaming trinkets, as well as a comprehensive range of retro games and systems. The store has also been manufacturing its own JAMMA compatible Super Guns for over two years and keeps a variety of arcade games in stock. We think they're lovely. We hope you do too.



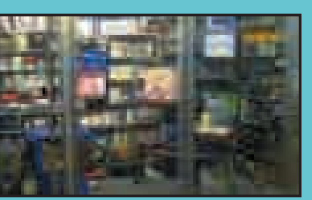




What's it called? VIDEO GAME CENTRE
Where can I find it? Down in sunny Bournemouth
Web Address: www.videogamecentre.co.uk
What can I buy there? The Video Game Centre stocks an enormous selection of videogames – both old and new. Catering for both hard-core and casual gamers, the store has the most comprehensive collection of SNES, Mega Drive and Saturn games you'll find anywhere in the country, as well as keeping a healthy selection of titles for pretty much every other console too. If you're a collector, you're likely to find more than just a mouthful of tasty morsels here.

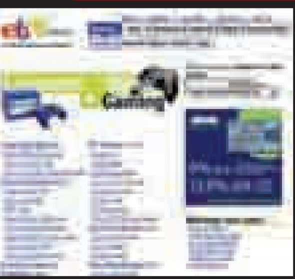


What's it called? CeX (COMPUTER EXCHANGE)
Where can I find it? There are 11 CeX shops – seven in and around London, one in Leeds, one in Birmingham, one in Southampton and a new one in Cardiff. The website has a mail order service.
Web Address: www.cex.co.uk
What can I buy there? CeX stocks an impressive selection of UK and imported games and consoles, ranging from such obscurities as the Bandai Wonderswan through to the PC Engine to more specialist items such as arcade PCBs and Neo Geo MVS cartridges. The Rathbone Place store (just off Oxford Street, London) has a dedicated retro section.



EBAY: THE UK'S ONLINE MARKETPLACE





Where can I find it? Online
Web Address: www.ebay.co.uk
What can I buy there? Pretty much anything. Theoretically, you should eventually be able to find just about every game-related item ever made, providing you don't mind waiting for it, of course.

In case you've never heard of it (which is unlikely), eBay was founded in 1995 and is now the world's largest online trading community. The site works like a regular auction room – items are listed for ten days and bids can be placed at any point during that period. But first you'll need to register…

JOINING EBAY

The eBay registration process is designed to be as user friendly as possible. All you need to do is click on the option at the top of the screen and enter your name, address and email address. You'll then have to create a user identity and password, and may also be asked to input your bank details to verify that all your information is true (this usually depends on which email service you're using). You will then be sent a confirmation email within 24 hours.

SEARCHING FOR AN ITEM

There are two simple methods of searching for items on eBay. The first is looking for groups of items (SNES games, for example) – simply click on the 'Computer & Video Gaming' link on the homepage then select the Super Nintendo option from the list. Or you can type the specific title of the game or product you're looking for in the 'what are you looking for?' box and eBay will list any current items that match your search.

MAKING A BID

If you find something you'd like to buy, you can make a bid by selecting the 'bid' option on the left-hand side of the screen. You'll be asked for your user ID and password, before specifying how much you wish to bid. You can either place a bid just above the current asking price, or simply state the maximum you'd like to pay and eBay will automatically bid on your behalf until you either win the item or the price goes higher than your maximum bid.

WINNING AN AUCTION

If you win the auction, you'll need to contact the seller to arrange payment, as well as collection or delivery. The item's description will usually specify how much postage and packaging will cost, as well as which methods of payment the seller accepts. It's up to you to make sure that you reach an agreement that suits both parties.

ESSENTIALS

TOO MANY GAMES, NOT ENOUGH MONEY. THANKFULLY THOUGH, NOT ALL OF THEM ARE WORTH SPENDING YOUR HARD-EARNED CASH ON. IF YOU WANT TO TASTE THE CREAM OF THE CROP, YOU'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE…

PLAYSTATION2

DETAILS

MANUFACTURER
Sony

UK LAUNCH DATE
24 November 2000

MEDIA
4.75-inch DVD Disc

CURRENT PRICE
£169.99

The oldest of the next-generation consoles, having had well over a year's head start over both the GameCube and Xbox. With support across the board from third-party developers, a built-in DVD player and backward compatibility with older PSone games, it's the most popular videogame console available today.



TOP TWENTY MUST-HAVE PLAYSTATION2 GAMES

No.	Title	Publisher	Developer
1	Ico	SCEE	In-House
2	Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	Rockstar Games	Rockstar North
3	TimeSplitters 2	Eidos	Free Radical
4	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	Activision	Neversoft
5	Pro Evolution Soccer 2	Konami	In-House
6	Burnout 2	Acclaim	Criterion
7	Devil May Cry	Capcom	In-House
8	Rez	SEGA	UGA
9	Suikoden III IMPORT	Konami	In-House
10	NBA Street 2	Electronic Arts	EA Sports BIG
11	Kingdom Hearts	SCEE	Squaresoft
12	Colin McRae Rally 3	Codemasters	In-House
13	Wild Arms 3	Ubi Soft	Media Vision
14	Ape Escape 2	Sony	In-House
15	Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	Eidos	Io Interactive
16	Project Zero	Wanadoo	Tecmo
17	Capcom VS SNK 2	Capcom	In-House
18	The Getaway	SCEE	Team Soho
19	Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance	Midway	In-House
20	Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance	Konami	In-House

VIEWPOINT
SUIKODEN III
Yes, yes, it's most definitely an outrage that Konami isn't planning to release the third instalment of the *Suikoden* series in the UK any time soon. But moaning about it isn't going to get you anywhere – unless enough of you actually bother to do it, that is.



VIEWPOINT
NBA STREET 2
Just because we didn't grow up on the street, doesn't mean we're not fond of a little three-on-three b-ball now, does it? Our thoughts exactly, which is why EA Sports BIG's brand new basketball game had us dissing each other and shooting some hoops. Word.



VIEWPOINT
PRO EVOLUTION 2
While the more arcadey delights of *ISS3* might be just the footballing tonic for some, we're still of the mind that there's nothing quite like a bit of *Pro Evo* – especially if you're the kind of person who likes to humiliate your friends by being great at it.



VIEWPOINT
HITMAN 2: SILENT ASSASSIN
After playing IO Interactive's new game, *Freedom*, this month, we felt compelled to go back and play its last effort, *Hitman 2*, again. The result? Even more lost hours, sneaking around and popping caps in various asses. Bliss.









GAMECUBE

DETAILS

MANUFACTURER
Nintendo

UK LAUNCH DATE
3 May 2002

MEDIA
3-inch Optical Disc

CURRENT PRICE
£129.99

Although it's the cheapest machine on the market, Nintendo's newest console shouldn't be under-estimated. The firm's long-established experience in games means that the GameCube can expect to see many quality first- and third-party games in the future. Primarily a games machine, the GameCube has no DVD function.

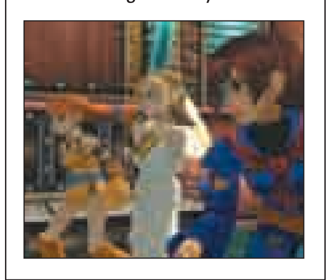


TOP TWENTY MUST-HAVE GAMECUBE GAMES

No.	Title		Publisher	Developer
1	Metroid Prime		Nintendo	In-House
2	The Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker		Nintendo	In-House
3	Winning Eleven 6: Final Evolution	IMPORT	Konami	In-House
4	Super Monkey Ball 2		SEGA	Amusement Vision
5	Animal Crossing	IMPORT	Nintendo	In-House
6	TimeSplitters 2		Eidos	Free Radical
7	Skies Of Arcadia Legends	IMPORT	SEGA	Overworks
8	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4		Activision	Neversoft
9	Ikaruga	IMPORT	Treasure	In-House
10	Super Mario Sunshine		Nintendo	In-House
11	Eternal Darkness		Nintendo	Silicon Knights
12	NBA Street 2		Electronic Arts	EA Sports BIG
13	Resident Evil		Capcom	In-House
14	Resident Evil Zero		Capcom	In-House
15	Mario Party 4		Nintendo	Hudson
16	Mr Driller: Drill Land	IMPORT	Namco	In-House
17	Star Wars: Rogue Leader		Activision	Factor 5
18	Sonic Mega Collection		SEGA	Sonic Team
19	Aggressive Inline		Acclaim	Z-Axis
20	Doshin The Giant		Nintendo	In-House

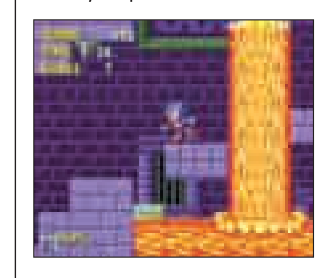
VIEWPOINT
SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS

Those of you who prefer your RPGs to be slightly more stat-flavoured rather than smothered with real-time goodness should give *Skies Of Arcadia* a try – it's got a healthy mix of both styles and offers a great story to boot.



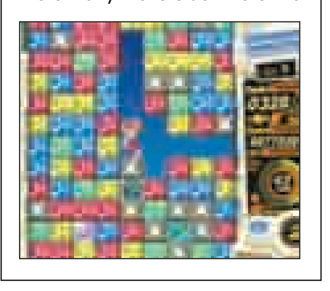
VIEWPOINT
SONIC MEGA COLLECTION

Okay, so it might not be the brand new *Sonic* game that a lot of people are waiting for. But considering that *Sonic Mega Collection* has the best of what the hedgehog's got to offer, it's still worth your pennies.



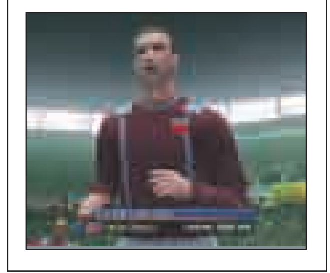
VIEWPOINT
MR DRILLER: DRILL LAND

It might be one of the most basic videogame concepts known to man, but that doesn't stop *Mr Driller: Drill Land* being a damn fun game. We don't doubt that this will be keeping us coming back for more many months down the line.



VIEWPOINT
WINNING ELEVEN 6: FINAL EVOLUTION

Sony might have a monopoly on the *Pro Evo* licence over here, but if you like a bit of Konami football action then you might want to pick up the Japanese equivalent for the GameCube. Get those FreeLoaders at the ready, people…



ESSENTIALS

TOO MANY GAMES, NOT ENOUGH MONEY. THANKFULLY THOUGH, NOT ALL OF THEM ARE WORTH SPENDING YOUR HARD-EARNED CASH ON. IF YOU WANT TO TASTE THE CREAM OF THE CROP, YOU'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE…

XBOX

DETAILS

MANUFACTURER
Microsoft

UK LAUNCH DATE
13 March 2002

MEDIA
4.75-inch DVD Disc

CURRENT PRICE
£159.99

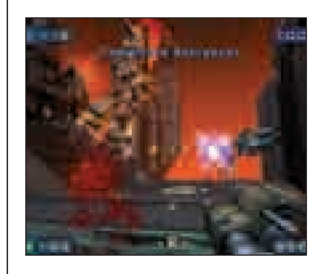
Despite a slow start, the Xbox is swiftly becoming one of the major players in today's console market. Suggestions that the machine is only 'a PC in a box' are founded upon the built-in hard drive, broadband support and DVD player. However, the Xbox is far more accessible to the casual gamer than most PCs.



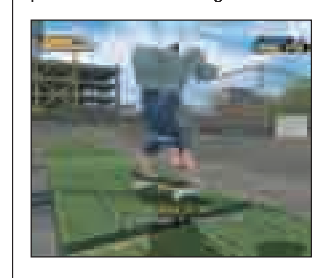
TOP TWENTY MUST-HAVE XBOX GAMES

No.	Title	Publisher	Developer
1	Halo	Microsoft	Bungie
2	Panzer Dragoon Orta	SEGA	Smilebit
3	Jet Set Radio Future	SEGA	Smilebit
4	TimeSplitters 2	Eidos	Free Radical
5	Splinter Cell	Ubi Soft	In-House
6	Colin McRae Rally 3	CodeMasters	In-House
7	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	Activision	Neversoft
8	Project Zero	Microsoft	Tecmo
9	Burnout 2: Point Of Impact	Acclaim	Criterion Studios
10	Aggressive Inline	Acclaim	Z-Axis
11	Dead Or Alive 3	Microsoft	Tecmo
12	Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	Eidos	Io Interactive
13	Quantum Redshift	Microsoft	Curly Monsters
14	Project Gotham Racing	Microsoft	Bizarre Creations
15	Buffy The Vampire Slayer	EA	In-House
16	Phantom Crash	Phantagram	In-House
17	Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance	Midway	In-House
18	Unreal Championship	Infogrames	Epic Games
19	Dead Or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball	Microsoft	Tecmo
20	Toejam & Earl III: Mission To Earth	SEGA	TJ&E Productions

VIEWPOINT
UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP
With Xbox Live now available to everyone (with a broadband connection, of course), *Unreal Championship* stands out as the only game with real 'pick up and play' attitude. If you've got Live, you need to get *Unreal* – it really is that simple.



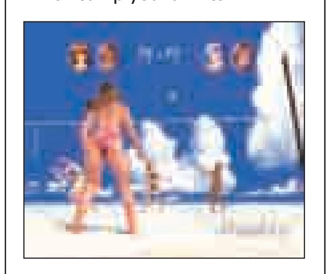
VIEWPOINT
TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 4
We've been revisiting our back catalogue a lot this month – in particular, the wonders of *Tony Hawk's 4*. Maybe it's because some of us still can't master the Pro Challenges, but we just can't put this one down… again.

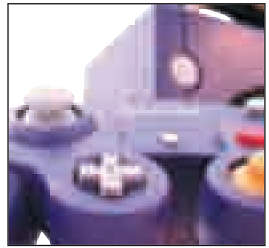


VIEWPOINT
BURNOUT 2: POINT OF IMPACT
See, Acclaim? You can do good things when you try – especially when they involve fast cars and more crashes than a ZX81. Featuring several improvements over its PS2 cousin, *Burnout 2* is nearly the best racer on the Xbox.



VIEWPOINT
DEAD OR ALIVE XTREME BEACH VOLLEYBALL
It takes a lot to divide opinion in the **games™** office but *DOAXBV* managed it quite successfully. A few people loved it, while others didn't see the point. Therefore, it's a must-have just so you can see which camp you fall into.






GBA

DETAILS

MANUFACTURER
Nintendo

UK LAUNCH DATE
22 June 2001

MEDIA
Flash Cartridge

CURRENT PRICE
£69.99

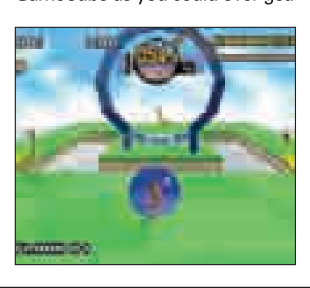


Ideal for gaming on the move, the GBA is a cheap and effective way of getting games to those who don't have time to sit down and play. The leaps in handheld technology mean that GBA games are now more accomplished and can even be compared favourably to their console-based cousins. The lovely new SP model is available now.

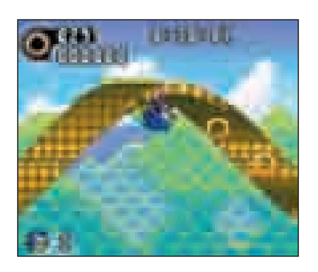
TOP TEN MUST-HAVE GAME BOY ADVANCE GAMES

No.	Title	Publisher	Developer
1	Metroid Fusion	Nintendo	In-House
2	Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe	Wanadoo	Crawfish
3	Castlevania: Harmony Of Dissonance	Konami	In-House
4	Zelda: A Link To The Past/Four Swords	Nintendo	In-House
5	Golden Sun	Nintendo	Camelot
6	Advance Wars	Nintendo	In-House
7	Street Fighter Alpha 3	Ubi Soft	Crawfish
8	Super Mario Advance 3: Yoshi's Island	Nintendo	In-House
9	Sonic Advance 2	SEGA	Sonic Team
10	Super Monkey Ball JR	SEGA	Realism

VIEWPOINT
SUPER MONKEY BALL JR
Monkeys on your GBA? Now you're talking. The digital controls might not be flawless but still, it's as close to its big brother on the GameCube as you could ever get.



VIEWPOINT
SONIC ADVANCE 2
Move over, *Sonic Advance* – the hedgehog's back and this time he's got a new friend. More levels, more rings, more speed – what else could you possibly ask for?



PC

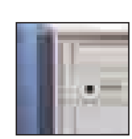
DETAILS

MANUFACTURER
N/A

UK LAUNCH DATE
N/A

MEDIA
4.75-inch CD/DVD Disc

CURRENT PRICE
£variable

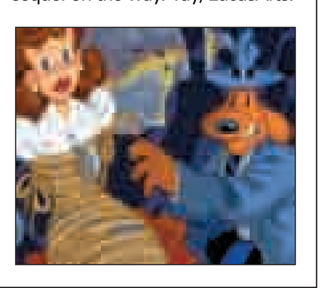


While primarily bought as a work platform, the PC has swiftly become the haven of the more 'mature' gamer. With its natural ability for online and LAN play, it is perfectly tailored for the FPS, strategy and MMORPG genres. However, it can cost a fortune to keep a PC up to date and running fast enough to support flashy graphics.

TOP TEN MUST-HAVE PC GAMES

No.	Title	Publisher	Developer
1	Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	Rockstar Games	Rockstar North
2	Unreal Tournament 2003	Infogrames	Digital Extremes
3	Championship Manager 4	Eidos	Sports Interactive
4	Operation: Flashpoint	Codemasters	In-House
5	Age Of Mythology	Microsoft	Ensemble Studios
6	Half-Life	Vivendi	Valve Software
7	The Sims	EA	Maxis
8	Civilization III	Infogrames	Firaxis
9	Fallout 2	Virgin Interactive	Interplay
10	Sam And Max Hit The Road	Activision	LucasArts

VIEWPOINT
SAM AND MAX HIT THE ROAD
Classic point 'n click adventure games don't come much more hilarious than this… and there's a sequel on the way. Yay, LucasArts.



VIEWPOINT
GTA: VICE CITY
It had to happen – having stormed the PS2, Rockstar is releasing the PC version of the *GTA3* sequel and plans to make a shedload of cash in the process. Typical, eh?



PERIPHERALS

THEY MAY NOT BE EVERYONE'S CUP OF TEA, BUT EACH CONSOLE HAS ITS OWN MUST-HAVE PERIPHERALS – THOSE LITTLE EXTRAS THAT MAKE THE GAMING EXPERIENCE ALL THE MORE PLEASURABLE. CAN YOU KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF THEM?

HORI GC PADS

DETAILS

CONSOLE
GameCube

FROM
HORI

CURRENT PRICE
¥1500 (approx £8)

AVAILABLE
Now

What is it with Nintendo and controllers anyway? While the SNES pads were plastic-crafted perfection, Nintendo seems to have forgotten how to make really good pads ever since. The GameCube pad is a perfect example; sure, it works brilliantly for *Super Mario Sunshine*, *Pikmin* and *Zelda* but try playing *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4* or *Capcom VS SNK 2: EO* with it and it's a completely different story. As we reported last issue though, a Japanese firm named HORI has had the ingenuity to make its own pads based on the older SNES format… and they work a treat. We've now got a handful in the office and they're absolutely brilliant – especially for beat-'em-ups and games run through the Game Boy Player. Unfortunately, they're only available from Japan at the moment – if you want one now for a reasonable price, then try visiting www.jpngames.com.



GAMEBOARD

DETAILS

CONSOLE
PS2/PC

FROM
Fanatec

CURRENT PRICE
£49.99

AVAILABLE
Now

Arguing over which type of control method is best for playing games – whether it's keyboard and mouse or just a joypad – is nothing new. Now though, you can have the best of both worlds with the Fanatec Gameboard. Utilising the aiming controls of a mouse with the movement of an analogue stick, it makes playing games like *Unreal Tournament* and *Half-Life* much easier. It's USB-compatible and you can even plug your own optical mouse into it – what's more, there's an RF add-on in the pipeline that'll make the whole thing wireless. At £50, it might be a bit pricey for some but it's still worth the investment and and may go some way to stalling the 'best control method' debate.



SPEEDSTER 3

DETAILS

CONSOLE
PlayStation2

FROM
Fanatec

CURRENT PRICE
£49.99

AVAILABLE
Now

Steering wheels are a really difficult thing to market when it comes to dealing with gamers who don't know any better – they all look pretty similar and it's only when you do a hands-on test (something you just can't do in stores these days) that you discover which one is the best. Back when the PS2 first came out though, the top steering wheel around was the Speedster 2; in fact, it was the best steering wheel of them all until JOYTECH recently released its own WilliamsF1 Racing Wheel (covered back in issue 2). That's why it's no surprise to see that the Speedster licence has returned to reclaim its crown – something it manages with much success. Not only does it look the business, but it's suitably comfortable to use as well; plus there are enough options to tweak the handling, rumble feedback and other minor things to make even the most hardened racing enthusiast fall for it. The Speedster 2 is dead – long live Speedster 3.

PSX/USB BRIDGE

DETAILS

CONSOLE
PC

FROM
RockFire

CURRENT PRICE
£19.99

AVAILABLE
Now

Despite the fact that Sony nicked ideas from virtually every other developer under the sun to make it, there's no denying that the Dual Shock 2 pad is pretty damn good – with versatility for every type of game under the sun, it's probably the best pad around at the moment. That's why we're impressed by this clever (and relatively cheap) USB adapter that allows you to plug a PS2 pad into your PC; it even comes with its own drivers to ensure it'll work straight out of the box. The result? No need to buy a fancy PC pad and the ability to play any number of top games (and even Windows-based emulators like SNES9X and WinFellow) with a really good pad. If you want to pick one up, check out www.lightwaveonline.co.uk.




eMag



THE KING OF FIGHTERS 94 (Arcade) Original arcade flyer. Look out for hot Neo Geo action next issue.


eMag


SOUL
CALIBUR II
It might look very pretty, but is it really better than the the original? games™ finds out in its exclusive three-format review next month

NEXT MONTH IN games™

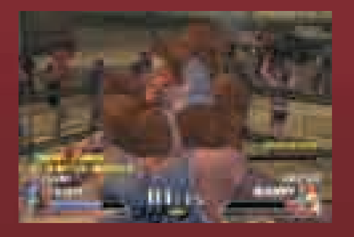
The months roll on and we draw ever closer to the joys of summer – usually a quiet time in the world of games. But that doesn't mean that Issue 6 is going to be any less jam-packed with gaming excellence…

MORE… PREVIEWS

With the greatness of E3 just around the corner, every developer under the sun is preparing to show off its wares. We take a look at the possible highs (and lows) of what we expect to see at the show.

MORE… REVIEWS

Forget going outside and doing things in the open air – there's plenty of games to be getting on with indoors, where you won't get stung by wasps or covered in dirt. Unless you live in a mudpit.



MORE… FEATURES

We've all seen videogames take a bashing at the hands of politicians over the years – but could games really be used as a way to preserve the status quo? **games**™ goes undercover to find out…



180 PAGES OF SWORD-SWALLOWING GOODNESS

And that's Issue 6 in a nutshell – albeit a 180-page nutshell made out of coloured paper and full of words rather than nuts. games™: more fun than a poke in the eye with a very sharp gaming stick!

ON SALE 22 MAY 03

CONTACT

ILLUMINATING THE WORLD OF gamesTM

WOULD NINTENDO PLEASE STAND UP AND TELL EVERYONE THAT IT'S OKAY? THAT WAY ALL THE GAMERS IN THE LAND WILL BE ABLE TO MOVE ONTO SOMETHING ELSE…

It seems that for a good many of you, Nintendo is *still* the most pressing issue in the world of videogames. However, we did spare room for one of our chums in Holland who seems to think crucifixion is too good for us...

MAKING CONTACT

There are many wonderful ways to get in touch with games™. The traditional postal method is perfectly acceptable using the address below:

games™
Paragon Publishing Ltd
Paragon House
St Peter's Road
Bournemouth
BH1 2JS

However, there are quicker ways to reach us thanks to the technological marvel that is the Internet. Email us at this address:
gamestm@paragon.co.uk

Alternatively, why not get yourself on our dedicated forum? Here you should be shielded from multiple spams and infantile remarks. Access to the site has been password protected and only those of you who have bought this issue of **games™** will be able to get onto the site – and if you have bought this magazine then you're not the sort to be abusive and childish, are you? Follow these quick steps to getting on the **games™** forum and enjoy hassle-free chatting with those of us who share a passion for gaming.

Step One:
Get yourself online. It's fairly simple, so we're sure you'll think of something.

Step Two:
Type the following into the Net browser window:
www.totalgames.net/forum/
This will give you read-only access to the forum. To get in on the fun, you'll have to register – you can do that by clicking on the 'Register' icon at the top of the page. Fill in your details, choose a name and then wait for a password to be emailed to you (which will arrive in no time).

Step Three:
Once registered, click on the **games™** forum icon. You'll need the password, and that's '**Philtre**'. Then a whole world of sophisticated wit and games chat will be yours.

RECENTLY, WE'VE HEARD that the Dixons group will be reducing the price of all things GameCube with a view to permanently dropping the product. We have also heard that various developers are dropping support for the GameCube due to its poor performance during the Christmas period. On the other hand, EA – one of the industry's largest developers – has announced 20 games that will take advantage of the GBA/GC link up capabilities, and companies like Capcom are still giving a great amount of support to a company whose share of the market is dwarfed by Sony's.

In light of these facts, what does the future hold for Nintendo? Have parts of the industry lost their grip on reality since the phenomenal success of the PS2, and now consider anything that sells less than 150,000 units per week a failure? Why is it that although the worldwide sales of the Xbox and GameCube are virtually identical, the GameCube is being touted as a flop and the Xbox is apparently going to achieve great things? The games industry seems to have abandoned common sense.

At the moment, large parts of the industry are expecting the GameCube to fail, and because this is the case we may yet see a self-fulfilling prophecy. Most importantly, however, why is an industry that is based on the enjoyment of the consumer determined to bring down what is not only one of the most treasured, but also one of the oldest, most innovative and above all fun companies the videogame world has seen?

It would seem that a lot of people, for one reason or another, want to see Nintendo fail. What are your views on this ultimately destructive behaviour by industry analysts and developers, and where do you see Nintendo being in the next ten years?
Mark Heery

games™: Concern for Nintendo and its hardware seems to be almost paternal among many gamers. As you rightly point out, Nintendo is more than capable of looking after its financial affairs and with its current crop of games and the release of the GBA SP we're sure that it is going to continue to be profitable in whatever avenue it decides to pursue.

No wonder GameCube is failing in England if my local game shop is anything to go by. Over several months I have been astounded by the copious amounts of drivel spouted by the shop staff. These include bullish comments such as 'Mario being a prick', 'GameCube being less powerful than a Dreamcast' and 'Nintendo updates being poor' (including feeble verbal assaults on the supreme *Zelda: TWW*). Best of all, summaries of how poor *Metroid Prime* is next to *Halo*.

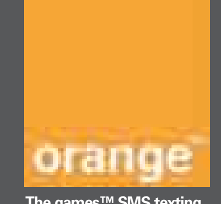
As a proud owner of both *Halo* and *Prime* I would like to feel that I could offer a balanced view. Both are astonishing games, pushing

"IN THE BULK OF VIDEOGAME RETAILERS THERE SEEMS TO BE A STRONG BIAS AGAINST THE GAMECUBE"

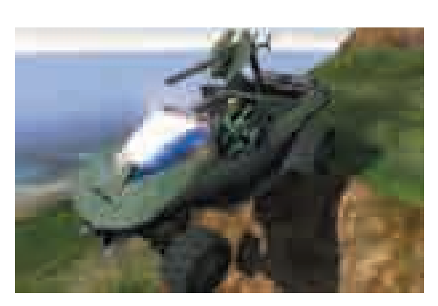
SMS TEXT

■ We've got an exclusive SMS text service sponsored by Orange. Simply text us your question or comment on

07970 043498



The games™ SMS texting service is brought to you courtesy of Orange. For more information on Orange's range of wirefree™ games log on to: www.orange.co.uk/multimedia



Ooh, handbags. Is *Halo* better than *Metroid Prime*? Apparently some shop assistants think so…

new limits in terms of game design, technical innovation, game dynamics, structure and content. Clearly, these people have never taken on a (3D) savage pack of Space Pirates, or fought with an Elite. Yet they were quick to form an opinion and offer such ill-informed remarks on *Mario Sunshine* and *Wind Waker* (which represent pinnacles of their next-generation genres).

In the bulk of videogame retailers there seems to be a strong bias against the GameCube. This is an extremely unhealthy situation, as potential customers are receiving a lot of biased and plainly untrue comments on this generation of gaming. Indeed, ten years ago, this problem did not exist. Customers could go into a more generic electronic entertainment outlet and decide between a Master System and a NES.

Now, we seem to have specific game shops that are run by gamers who ultimately have a fairly potent influence on the distribution of the market. I think the games retail industry needs to have a serious think about where it's going, or otherwise Nintendo might be packing its metaphorical hardware bags and taking up residence in software-only street (much like SEGA before it) quicker than it realises.
John Pollard

games™: Aha! Is this the reason for the GameCube's current strife? Videogame shop assistants? Have you received this sort of treatment? The Kilroy team would like to hear… No, wait, *we* would like to hear from you.

☐ **RETRO GAMING MAY** be becoming popular, but where are they going to draw the line on what they bring back? *Sonic* will always be cool, but ye olde Atari arcade games? That's beyond retro and into prehistoric!

Please tell me they're not going to bring back *Horace Goes Skiing* for the GameCube!
Michelle Waghorn

games™: We're not sure who 'they' are. It's the gamers who ensure the lifespan of any gaming character. Mario, Lara and Sonic have proven popular due mainly to the quality of the gameplay and have therefore lived on in numerous sequels created to satisfy the needs of gamers. Though retro gaming is popular due to the quality of some older titles, we doubt very much that *Horace Goes Skiing* will be making a comeback any time soon… shame though!

☐ **THERE HAVE BEEN** calls for tips sections in **games™**, which you have replied 'no' to, but what about masterclasses for older games in the Retro section? Games that have been out so long that total knowledge has been attained of all the strategies, secrets and so on.

This would of course (a) not appeal to the demographic that waltz into GAME and buy a guidebook and a game together – these are older titles, (b) please me and other retrophiles if there's something in a game I love, but patently suck at (there are lots), and (c) ensure **games™**'s hard-core credentials by offering the most in-depth guide one could ever dream of for certain titles, instead of giving the impression that you simply spend five minutes on an emulator and call a random old game 'good' to make yourselves look big.

I mean, for some games, even an in-depth strategy would amount to maybe four extra

CONTACT

ILLUMINATING THE WORLD OF gamesTM

TEXT LIFE...

☐ Thank U, U have reminded me how much I loved my SNES. So I'm lookin' to buy one. U should have a retro sale page.
As if by magic, a shopkeeper appeared. Or in this case, page 157…

☐ Does the rumour of a new PS2 *Castlevania* game have any substance? Great mag by the way.
It is true, apparently. Konami is keeping tight-lipped about it. Expect news to leak after E3.

☐ Loved your C64 retro coverage – brought a tear to my eye. Any chance of a feature on the best game/series of all time: *Last Ninja*?
We've been thinking about 'doing' *Last Ninja*. Keep your fingers crossed…

☐ Will there be a *Kingdom Hearts* Xbox release or should I just get the PS2 version?
***Kingdom Hearts* will not be appearing on the Xbox, so best stick to the PS2 version.**

☐ The first two issues are great but have you thought about doing a DVD with future issues? Keep up the good work.
We thought about it and then we fainted. Don't you think that having to fill 180 pages every month is enough?

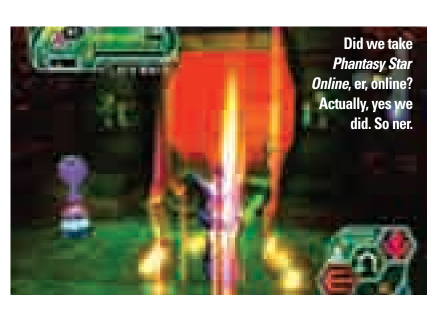
☐ U R fantastic! An in-depth game mag that is truly readable from cover to cover. I have an Xbox & just got a GCUBE. *Sp Cell* is great but *Mario SS* is pure gaming joy.
Cheers! Glad that you're open-minded enough to sample the visual delights of *Splinter Cell* and appreciate Nintendo genius.

☐ I had a Kempston joystick interface for my 48K Spectrum because it didn't have a joystick port, alas they weren't very stable and too much wrenching caused it to snap and f*ck up the back of the Spectrum!
The Kempston saga continues…

☐ Are we going to 2 C a UK release of *Ikaruga*? If not, it seems as tho Nintendo will lose a few more PAL gamers as they start importing… Worrying. Excellent mag!
Patience, patience. *Ikaruga* will appear in May, so you can expect some top blasting action then.

☐ Why is *TimeSplitters 2* raved about, ive got it on Xbox and the controls are crap and the graphics are bland, *Halo* is way ahead of it!
***Halo* is indeed a fine game (one of the finest) but *TS2* has its merits and if you return to it, you'll be rewarded with loveliness. Trust us, we're always right…**


***Prime* worse than *Halo*? It's a free country…**


Did we take *Phantasy Star Online*, er, *online*? Actually, yes we did. So ner.

pages, due to their simpler (in my opinion, more refined and focused) nature. And no other publication does it. And it's a virtual middle finger toward *EDGE*, who refused to disclose the method of accessing the minus world in their *Super Mario Bros.* retroview – I know how, but some don't, knowledge is power, people!

I bet I'm not the only person after this kind of thing – surely there has to be somebody else who may have, say, picked up the *EDGE Retro Making Of...* special, read about the strategies (that were merely *mentioned*, and that's all) in The Making Of... *Centipede* or similar, and wondered exactly what they were and how to achieve them. Or maybe I'm alone in wanting to master all games. And the older ones sure as hell are harder to master than new titles, it being a case of strategies and skills versus secrets and unlockables.

Jay Townsend

games™: We have no interest in sticking middle fingers up to any magazine. However, we like a challenge and if any of you do contact us we'll see if we can rustle up some guides or something in the future…

☐ **I THOROUGHLY ENJOYED** The Living Dead article in issue 3 and whilst I've no doubt that a lot of your coverage is pretty much cutting edge – for the 'big five' formats mentioned on your cover – I couldn't help thinking it would great to see some occasional news or reviews on those little gems leaking out of Japan for the Dreamcast. We had *KOF2001*, *Guilty Gear X* et-al over the last year, and *KOF2002* has been confirmed for DC, PS2 and arcade.

I for one would love to see some detail on these as well as a dedicated import section covering some of the wonderful (not to mention weird) Japan-only titles across all formats. I'm sure that I'm not alone in my love of importing these titles – I'd have missed some cracking fighting titles over the years otherwise. Just a thought and keep up the good work.

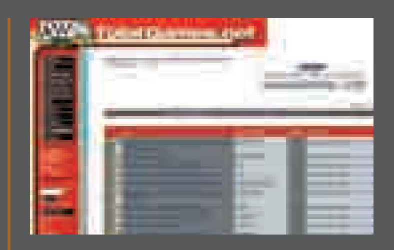
Mark Ormerod.

games™: That's a very good point. Had it not been for our friendly importers, we might very well have missed *Ikaruga* on the DC. It's something that we'll definitely look into.

☐ **IT'S ABOUT TIME** that someone came on the scene and mullered the competition. It's really refreshing to be reading a mag that is obviously written by people who love games, who understand games and who know the history of games without the condescending nature of 'other' mags.

However, I have one question to ask, well more an observation (for confirmation that I know what I'm talking about I've been playing games for over 20 years). It's interesting to look at what the top ten games were in the Nineties compared to what the top ten is now, i.e. all original games, compared to sequels. Okay, there are a few, but nothing compared to what it was like. Don't get me wrong, there are good games coming out, but they don't seem to be filled with the same originality. Developers seem to stick to one franchise rather than try something different.

I more than understand the rationale of this – if it sells why change it? But come on, we need more independent developers who are prepared to experiment. A good example of



FROM THE FORUM

What is a hard-core gamer? Are you one? Or is it a pointless definition?

☐ **WOLF**
posted 21 March 2003 01:52 AM
What is a hard-core gamer? This is something I've asked many gamers. Most say it's how good at games you are but I don't know. What does everyone else think?

☐ **Number45**
posted 21 March 2003 08:13 AM
My definition of a hard-core gamer would be someone who, without good reason, thinks they are better than any other gamer on the planet. Can't stand the term myself.

☐ **Jayextee**
posted 21 March 2003 02:16 PM
A hard-core gamer is somebody who plays consoles made of building detritus… Seriously, you have an afternoon to kill – what do you do in general? Play games or watch television? Therein lies the answer to that one, I think. Simplified, yes, but a hard-core gamer is, IMO, somebody who would rather play games than most other things.
I hate the term too, but it exists – even if, as we see here, nobody is sure what the hell it means!

☐ **Hong Kong Phooey**
posted 21 March 2003 05:51 PM
I hate all these terms – hard-core… casual… so what ? You play videogames, so you're a gamer. Simple as that. And as for people who call themselves 'old skool'… give me a break…

☐ **Master hunter**
posted 21 March 2003 09:47 PM
Hard-core gamer: someone who loves playing games, knows developers' names and products at the drop of a hat, knows release dates off by heart and pays attention to gaming news. Makes his/her own mind up when choosing games. It's more about the attitude towards gaming rather than how much you play. I am hard-core but I love going out as well.
Loyalist gamer or fanboy: someone who may be hard-core but cannot appreciate other systems. Only likes one system as he hates and puts down the others.
Casual gamer: someone who relies on heavy marketing and whether 'their friends have one' when deciding what games to buy. They are the type of person that buys PS2 for its image and stays away from GCN for the same reason. If you asked them who Shigeru Miyamoto was they probably wouldn't know.

☐ **Clavat**
posted 22 March 2003 11:03 AM
I don't know what a hard-core gamer is, I didn't think they existed. I thought it was some silly term that Internet geeks use. If you look at hard-core gamer as someone who keeps up-to-date on gaming news, knows most release dates and prefers to play games than most other things, then I'm a hard-core gamer, but I think it's a damn stupid term to use. I think I'm just a gamer.

☐ **Master hunter**
posted 22 March 2003 10:49 PM
A gamer is just someone who plays games. Do you really want to be considered in the same group of the above mentioned 'Casual gamers'? What's WRONG with the term anyway? Would you prefer Game geek? Computer geek? What?
To me, anyone who spends their time on a game forum, especially one from a games magazine, is a hard-core gamer. Is there something wrong with that?

"I WANT MORE IDEAS THAT GET ME EXCITED, NOT UPDATES. SIMPLE."

this is to look at the Dreamcast – it had some amazing games and, in my opinion, was the most underrated games system in the world but look what happened. Was it because of bad marketing or because people just weren't interested in new ideas?

Rez? *Shenmue*? *Phantasy Star Online*? I WANT MORE IDEAS THAT GET ME EXCITED, NOT UPDATES. SIMPLE.
Archie Powell

games™: This is an age-old problem. As you rightly point out, the Dreamcast was a very capable machine that had tons of high-quality, original games. Unfortunately, it was poorly marketed and gamers decided to stick to the more popular PlayStation2 – a console that was much better supported by developers. We'd love it if more original games were released, but guess what? It's the formulaic games that sell the best and publishers and developers are out to make a living. Sad but true.

☐ **TOO MANY OF** the letters printed in the Contact section of your magazine start by congratulating you. I'm not going to do that. In fact, I'm going to do quite the opposite…

Reading your frighteningly uninformative review of *Phantasy Star Online*, it became apparent that to me that the 'online' part of the title didn't seem to mean much to the reviewer. He/she/it obviously didn't play the game online, completely defeating the purpose of the game and ignoring its main appeal. Sacrilege.

Several frustrating articles later and I stumble upon p.134 of issue 3 – the Look Back In Anger page. This has to be a joke. Not only do you shamelessly criticise the original and best *Tomb Raider* for no purpose other than to stir up some controversy, but then you top it all off by committing the biggest sin of all – actually saying that *Mario 64* is 'overrated'. In your defence, you say that the game is 'so much better' than poor old *Tomb Raider*. But this goes without saying, and doesn't justify your out-of-control rubbish.

Still, I doubt you'll be crucified for your apparent lack of knowledge of what constitutes an overrated game. No, people don't tend to crucify nowadays. It's more like the electric chair.
Alex Dudok de Wit
P.S. I predict that you won't print this, but I wouldn't mind being proved wrong.

games™: Ah, not-very-constructive criticism. We're not going to have a 'one person's opinion' rant (because it's been done to death) but we do have to correct you on one point. Did we play online with *PSO* for the review? Despite what you might believe, we did take it online for several hours. If we hadn't, we wouldn't have commented that "playing online holds some kind of elusive enjoyment" or that "the rather monotonous and shallow gameplay remains unchanged", which is the main reason for the game's lower-than-you-expected score. Playing online might paper over the cracks, but it doesn't stop the gameplay being dull. Have your own opinion, but don't accuse us of lying just because you don't agree with ours.
P.S. We did print your letter – if only to snigger at the fact that when you posted our original response (and subsequently, your original email) on a rival mag's forum, everyone branded you an idiot. Calling your email 'You disgust me' was a nice touch, too.

CONTINUES



